



FIVE GALLONS OF GASOLINE

MORRIS B. WELLS

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BY
MORRIS B. WELLS



NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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Published, April, 1911

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

FIVE GALLONS OF GASOLINE was written by the author whose name appears on the title page in collaboration with a well-known writer, who, for reasons connected with the publication of another work entirely his own, did not wish to have his name appear in the present volume.

To Patrick H. W. Ross, our genial and lovable friend, whose many admirable ways and whose steady British calm formed an inspiration for one of our favoured characters, this book is affectionately dedicated by the Authors.

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CHAPTER I

IT'S EASY ENOUGH TO ECONOMISE WHEN ONE
DOES NOT WANT TO BUY

"You can't show me one good reason," declared Harkaway explosively. "If you can, for heaven's sake trot it out!"

Biddleston looked helplessly at him.

"You see, Hark," he slowly began, in a dubious tone, "my wife objects awfully to the smell of gasoline. And besides, she'd say I was spending money!"

"Well, how can you get a car without spending money?" retorted Harkaway, unappeased. "Do you think anyone's going to trust you on your face?"

Biddleston mournfully shook his head, and made one of those incomprehensible replies, so frequent in married men.

"A fellow mustn't spend money, you know," he insisted obstinately, as much as to infer

that spending money was a gross extravagance, and wasn't being done by the best people.

"Bah!" said Harkaway, in disgust, for it looked as if the matter were settled; "spending money is the least of my troubles!"

Biddleston and Harkaway had been making up their minds for several months to buy an automobile. Each had finally picked out his favourite machine, and carried the catalogue describing it wherever he went, ready to point out its special advantages at any moment that the automobile subject might come up.

But Biddleston's statement about spending money had a sort of finality, somehow. Harkaway couldn't dispute it; and he had learned that when Biddleston brought Mrs. Biddleston's opinion forward, there was usually an end to debate.

"Didn't we decide that it was the only thing to do?" asked Harkaway, pluckily returning to the charge. "Didn't I agree that we would get that three cylindered monstrosity you insisted upon? And here, after I give in and submit to your bull-headed assumption that

you know it all, you go and object because it costs money!"

"Anyway, it will cost less with the machine I picked out!" Biddle-son said, brightening up a little.

"That's right," replied Harkaway, as heartily as he could. "The 'Durable' is a good car for the money; and as you say, she's economical of gasoline."

Secretly, though, Harkaway didn't think much of the "Durable," in spite of a remarkable contrivance, described at great length in the catalogue, which Biddle-son was always talking about. Biddle-son had chosen the Durable particularly because of this contraption—the "jigger," he called it—which was a great saver of gasoline.

As far as one could understand from Biddle-son's explanations, if you "used" the jigger right, the Durable would run farther on a gallon of gasoline than any other car that took a larger quantity to go the same distance. According to Harkaway, the "jigger" was a dinky little affair right alongside the seat

where you couldn't find it because the lap robe was in the way, and you turned it, according to what the catalogue said, one way going up hill, and a little more the same way on a foggy morning, and back again when the engine got hot, and still another way in a high altitude. Harkaway didn't seem to think this last manoeuvre would count for much, because he more than suspected that the Durable couldn't climb high enough to make it pay. And besides this, he told Biddleston that while he was messing around trying to find the jigger he would miss the road and run into a well, or a hayrake, or a cow, and it would cost more than a whole tankful of gasoline to square up. It was the day on which Biddleston had left his catalogue at home and was helpless that Harkaway brought up this point; and when he met Harkaway every time thereafter until the end of the week Biddleston talked steadily of some "Investments" he thought were good, or of a house he intended building, or of some other obnoxious way he had of disposing of his spare capital, utterly refusing to be turned aside.

This was unbearable, and by Sunday Harkaway was ready to capitulate and agree that the jigger greatly lessened gasoline consumption, and as the jigger was an exclusively Durable feature, naturally they would have to buy a Durable.

"You bet she's a good car," Biddleston responded with enthusiasm, seeing that he was going to have his own way, "and what's more, you *can* get at it! You can change front sprockets in five minutes and take out the transmission in ten."

"What in Hades do you want to take the transmission out for, Bid?" asked Harkaway, somewhat dubious as to the advantage of that mechanism's extreme accessibility.

"Why — er — er — what do I want to take out the transmission for?" Biddleston repeated confusedly. As a matter of fact, he didn't know a planetary transmission—from a leather belt. When he and Harkaway took the first step in buying an auto by acquiring seven different catalogues each, Biddleston had the idea that the transmission gear was part of the

steering apparatus, because two rods that went forward to the front wheels crossed each other; "*Trans*, across, you know," the "mission" part of it was entirely beyond him. Biddleston had studied Latin in his school days and it was a pleasant recollection with him. "All Gaul is divided into three parts," he used to quote sonorously, in the original, when he had a good chance. The fact that an auto could be divided into a thousand parts, either voluntarily, or accidentally, was probably what determined Biddleston in his choice between a gasoline engine and a horse.

"What do I want to take the transmission out for?" he repeated a second time, glaring at Harkaway, and angry with himself because he didn't know the answer. "Why, to put it back again, you gump. What does anyone take a transmission out for?"

"Never mind, old man," Harkaway said soothingly. "Some day I'll be glad you know how to do it. When the flywheel won't go round, we can take out the transmission and see if anything's stuck, and, besides, you can take

it out and show it to Mrs. Biddleson. She'll be tickled to death with those cute little wheels, she ——”

“O-o-oh!” groaned Biddleson uneasily, a look of sad remembrance spreading over his countenance like the gloom of departing day, “I forgot my wife. You know, Harkaway,” he said anxiously, “the fact is I never said anything to Miriam about this motor business. It's our little surprise, you know, and it would not do to spring it prematurely. You get me, don't you? When we are all ready we'll announce our intentions firmly and then go ahead. Miriam can say what she pleases, but she'll find it's too late.”

“Yessir!” continued Biddleson in tones of unalterable resolve. “I've made up my mind I'm going to have *some* fun once in a while, and when she gets through talking she can — she can ——” He stopped. — “You know how it is, Harkaway,” he burst out after a moment's painful reflection, “Miriam always has a great deal to say, and — and, of course, you understand, old man, I love my wife just as

much as I ever did. She's a mighty good old girl, just as good as any man's wife! You know, Hark, I wouldn't say anything against her for the world. But you're not married, or you'd have some idea how I feel. Now, when *you* feel like going anywhere, you go; and when you want anything, you get it. Sometimes, Hark, I wish—I wish that——”

Biddleston did not finish. He thought this time of that darkened period, the bitter six months when he was recovering from a malignant attack of typhoid; he remembered the little kindergarten that his wife strove to maintain, the drawing lessons she gave, even though she couldn't draw herself; he was thinking and he knew that Harkaway knew that he was thinking—he knew that Harkaway knew that he knew that Harkaway knew he was thinking of the complete collapse of his courage when their little fortune was all but lost. Neither of them could forget the indomitable and sweet fortitude of Miriam during that critical period. It wasn't hard to recall, either, how Miriam had humbled herself be-

fore Mrs. Thompson, the wife of the president of the bank where Biddleston was now cashier.

How they both hated Mrs. Thompson! Biddleston's hatred was, of course, of a subtle and silent type, as became his position in the bank; Harkaway's was of the open, violent sort. Doing business with the other bank, Harkaway was at liberty to hate Mrs. Thompson as freely and conspicuously as he wished without fear of financial embarrassment. It is possible that this mutual feeling was not only unchristian but vicious. Perhaps they should both have been grateful to Mrs. Thompson. As a matter of fact they had been grateful when Biddleston got his job as bookkeeper in the Farmer and Fisherman's Bank through the efforts—machinations, they called them now—of Mrs. Thompson. Their gratitude had continued unabated till it became clear that Mrs. Thompson's philanthropy was merely a dastardly scheme which enabled her to look down from a superior social height upon the wife of her husband's *employé*. Before that time any attempt in Tidewater to

look down on Miriam had been achieved from purely physical altitudes. Her visiting cards had read, in beautiful copper-plate, "Mrs. Ezra de Poe Biddleston." It was during their honeymoon that Miriam had wished to make it *Ezra*. She said it looked more foreign and romantic, but Biddleston wouldn't have it. "Ezra," he maintained, was a good old family name that "suited him plenty," and as for genealogy it had that old Spanish swashbuckler of hers, De Poe, backed into the coal hole.

As a matter of fact the famous De Poe ancestor had not been a Spaniard at all; instead, he had been a Frenchman with six girls' names in front of the De Poe and a castle somewhere which was of no use to him, as he hadn't money to hire people to sweep it and paint it and put a new roof on it when it rained. At least that was the reason everybody gave for his marrying Miriam's other ancestor, Miriam Hicks, whose father ran a store up at Tidewater. The Spanish part of the ancestry, such as it was, came from Ferdinand de Poe, the first De Poe's son, who kept what little money his

father left him and spent all his time trying to live the genteel life and imitate his grandfather in the old castle in France or Lombardy or on the Rhine (Miriam was never quite sure of its location, but it was safe to say it was a castle in Spain) and succeeded in making himself as fine a forefather as anyone in Tidewater could wish. Not that Ferdinand was any more Spanish than his father, only his name appeared to Miriam to be pure Castilian, besides being manly and belligerent and socially correct.

And this Ferdinand de Poe (to straighten the whole matter out once for all) had given his name to the bay just beyond Tidewater, where the Pacific went in and out by tides and washed the front doorstep of the De Poe mansion, which still stands back of the little bay beach among the hemlocks. Ferdinand was not only the godfather of the little sound on which Tidewater slept, but was Miriam's grandfather as well, so that she had always been known as "one of the De Poes." When she married Biddleson it was generally under-

stood that Bid was lucky to get into such a good family and the De Poes were rather condoled with because Miriam had married a plain American. Miriam's father seemed to think this was a joke, but as he died soon after, this error was overlooked, and Miriam couldn't have wished for more sympathy and respect if she had had six genuine Spanish ancestors. Some of the people of Tidewater thought Miriam enjoyed her forefathers really more than was just to Biddleson; but this was quite natural, considering the great social prestige they gave her; whereas Biddleson was just Biddleson and everybody knew just what kind of a chap he was and how much money he had.

It is true she had raised Biddleson to her own level for a while. She had ironed out and starched his name, insisted on his being paid exactly the respect that she required for herself and managed to impress on Tidewater that her husband had certain claims to social distinction himself. For some months after they were married, the rumour was around that Biddleson once had a grandfather who had

been ashamed of him, or an uncle who had refused to recognise him, or something of that sort, the idea being that even if Biddleson were a poor worm himself, there had been those in his family who once breathed a loftier atmosphere, and, classically speaking, were "some pumpkins." But this passed away, the rumour having no foundation in fact, and Miriam was reluctantly obliged to let him slip back into his own social rank as a hopeless case.

When at last Miriam fully realised that she was only Mrs. Biddleson, the wife of a clerk in the bank, and not Mrs. Ezra de Poe Biddleson the haughty queen of Tidewater's socially elect, her calling cards suffered a sudden diminution in elegance. They were now printed in plebeian type and read: "Mrs. E. D. Biddleson." While they were distinctly legible and a means of complete identification, they could not be considered a passport to the sacred circle of Tidewater's upper ten.

Tidewater—particularly feminine Tidewater—had felt sorry for Mrs. Biddleson. "Poor thing!" it said, "and from such a good family,

too. Don't you think we'd better call?" But it didn't call; neither did Miriam with her cheap pasteboard cards. Who, for example, in the olden days would have had the temerity to intrude upon the ever socially correct Mrs. Ezra de Poe Biddleston with nothing to present as a talisman but a dollar a hundred card? Certainly not the then submissive but socially ambitious Mrs. Thompson whose social star had been slow to rise.

When Biddleston got to be teller, the printed cards went into the fire and Miriam shifted her social clutch to the intermediate speed and became Mrs. Ezra D. P. Biddleston. Thus she remained, not too patiently biding her time when she could resume the aristocratic copperplate without endangering her husband's job. Then, oh, certainly then, she would put Mrs. T. back where she belonged. She remembered and would never forget the bitterest time of all, and this was the time when Ezra and Harkaway violently and explosively invented and instantly cast away as unworthy numberless schemes of vengeance upon the now acknowl-

edged social leader of Tidewater. Mrs. Thompson, the execrable Mrs. T., the supercilious and ancestress Mrs. Thompson, the malignant upstart had dared to write to Miriam a note addressed to Mrs. Ez. Depot Biddleson!

How easy it was to despise Mrs. Thompson!

In view of this deep-rooted and never-ending conflict between Mrs. Biddleson and Mrs. T. one feature of the Durable that particularly recommended the car to Biddleson was a detachable tonneau that could be replaced by an up-to-date rumble seat that made the Durable look like a three thousand dollar forty-horse power roadster. At least it looked that way in the catalogue. So far no one in Tidewater had been progressive enough to buy a Durable. And in addition to this Biddleson had it figured out that if they bought two sets of wheels, one yellow, the other maroon, people would think Miriam had two cars—just like Mrs. Thompson. Or by leaving off the rumble seat and the tonneau and substituting a trunk with a brass lock and trim-

mings, they might possibly achieve the reputation of having three, something that even the president's wife couldn't attain. Biddle-son had a way of being outrageously extravagant at very little expense, and when it came to supporting Miriam's social aspirations, he was quite capable of spending some extra money, even.

"By George!" exclaimed Biddle-son excitedly, after a long silence in which these things were thought over, "it's just struck me how we might work it."

Harkaway remained calm, for he knew that whatever his friend was thinking about he had had it on his mind for a long time, and had been afraid to mention it. Years of rigid suppression under Miriam had made spontaneity, with Biddle-son, a thing of previous preparation and careful planning.

"The other day," he continued, stealthily laying the grounds for his play, like the poker player who draws only one card when he has three of a kind, "Miriam and I were out walking when Mrs. Thompson dusted by in that

new red car of theirs, and I said something about a cylinder missing. Miriam, she—you know how Miriam looks when she thinks you're up to something—stopped right short and demanded: 'How did you know what was the matter with that car, Rae Biddle-son?'"

"You know I wouldn't lie to my wife, Harkaway. We've been married ten years and I've never lied to her yet! But we don't have to tell everything we know, so I said, 'Why, Harkaway, he knows a lot about such things; in fact he is thinking of buying one. He——' Here Harkaway emitted a choking sound, and Biddle-son went on hastily: "I'm telling you just how the thing happened, Hark, so you'll understand. Miriam never would let me finish a sentence.

"You should have heard her! 'Harkaway!' she snorted. 'It's always Harkaway! You've been listening to another of these perfectly silly ideas of his. He is always going to buy something. Why, he was going to buy the Cliff House in San Francisco once and tear it

down because he didn't like the looks of it! If it hadn't fallen into the ocean, or burned, he'd have telegraphed the mayor, or somebody, for an option, or whatever he calls those things that he gets and never manages to take up. Tom Harkaway hasn't any money to waste on an automobile, Rae, and you know it.'

"Perhaps I made a mistake, Harkaway, but I had to say something," Biddleson explained apologetically. "'Oh, yes, he has,' I said. 'Anyway, he's got enough to pay his share in——'

"'Share!' she screeched. 'Share in what, Rae Biddleson?'

"On the level I thought it was all off, old man, but it wasn't. I didn't have to lie, either. I'm not so slow myself, sometimes," said Biddleson proudly.

"'You see, it's this way,' I told her. I had to fake up some sort of a con in a hurry. 'Harkaway's been talking of a little proposition, but it didn't look like much to me, and I didn't think it worth mentioning, but now——'

"'You needn't waste your time talking to

me of Tom Harkaway's preposterous propositions,' she sniffed right out. 'Proposition! how I hate that word. It always makes me think of an offer of marriage. Harkaway's forever talking of his "propositions," but I never heard of any that amounted to a row of pins. When he settles down, if he ever does, he'll wish he'd saved his money. The first time I get a chance,' she said, and say, old man, she was hot under the collar all right, 'I'll tell Tom Harkaway exactly what I think of him.'"

Harkaway groaned. "I'm afraid I've got you into trouble, Hark, old boy," continued Biddleson, apprehensively. "Another thing, too, I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Miriam intended to marry you off. Why, she'd marry me to someone else if she didn't have to die to do it. Miriam never gives up at match making. If she has any particular girl in mind, you'd better take to the woods until she gets rid of her. I guess you're safe, though, unless—unless—Dorothy—no, I guess she's too young. You never saw my wife's little sister, did you, Hark? I haven't seen the kid myself

for quite a while. Miriam likes you, old man, in spite of what she says. She looks a long way ahead, though, and Dorothy is the only one left. She must be a cute little kid—and—no, no! of course not. You couldn't marry that baby, an old fellow like you. Anyway, Harkaway, you can see it's up to you to clear up that auto matter. Come home to dinner with me; I told Miriam I might ask you. If it's a good dinner, she'll be proud of it, and that'll give you a chance to lead up. You can tell her that you wanted me to go in with you on buying an auto, but that I wouldn't even think of it. That'll put her on your side right at the start. Tell her—tell her—oh, it isn't necessary for me to give *you* pointers on what to tell her. I'll press the button at the right time and you can do the rest."

CHAPTER II

BIDDLESON PRESSES THE BUTTON

As Biddleson had hopefully prophesied, it *was* a good dinner and five courses. Harkaway would have enjoyed it, had it not been for Biddleson. The blundering idiot "pressed the button" too soon. Harkaway, never argumentative when dining, felt particularly ecstatic after cream of celery soup. And a vista of clam fritters, China pheasant, crab salad and so on raised him into blissful contemplation. As the last spoonful of the celestial soup passed his lips Biddleson kicked him savagely on the shins from under the table—that was his way of pressing the button—at the same time giving him a knowing look as much as to say, "Now's your time."

Harkaway scowled ferociously, and the expression wasn't lost on his hostess. "What's the matter, Mr. Harkaway?" she inquired anx-

iously. "You haven't a toothache, have you? We have some oil of cloves; that's just the thing for——"

"No, Mrs. Biddleson," Harkaway interrupted manfully. "Only a slight twinge. I suffer frightfully sometimes, though, but just now I was thinking of the soup we had at our boarding house last night. I always look that way when I think of a boarding house."

"Hope it's not catching," put in Biddleson, facetiously. "No boarding house looks in mine!"

The next course being clam fritters, Harkaway cheered up greatly. In days gone by the Biddleson functions had become celebrated for the clam fritters which only a few were aware Miriam prepared herself. But her guest had scarcely begun on these delectables when Mrs. Biddleson exclaimed sympathetically, "Do let me get you the oil of cloves!" Biddleson had just pressed the button again and accompanied it with a warning grimace. Harkaway recollected himself and returned, "So good of you, Mrs. Biddleson.

Don't think of it. It has passed.—What delicious fritters!”

After the fritters Harkaway detected another look of utter imbecility gathering on his host's face. Harkaway knew that he intended to be shrewd and illuminative, and that in a second more he would press the button, as he idiotically called it, again. Harkaway raised his foot carefully to just the right height and Biddleston barked his own shins and was silent till the coffee.

“That's rather a handsome car of the Thompsons',” Harkaway began, forestalling another of Biddleston's signals by the sixteenth part of a second. “Don't you admire it, Mrs. Biddleston?”

“Very much,” Mrs. Biddleston replied very calmly.

Harkaway was disappointed. By rights, Miriam should have consumed ten minutes discussing Mrs. Thompson's hats, ancestors and manners—things she never could forget nor forgive. In face of her disconcerting calm Harkaway took another tack: “She's a good

car, too; has plenty of speed. But she's heavy on her feet and it will take five hundred a year for tires. Got as much machinery in her as a sawmill. And the amount of gasoline those big ice wagons will eat up is a fright! Ain't that so, Rae?"

"I suppose so. I'll take your word for it," Biddleston said weakly, under his wife's eyes.

Harkaway went on:

"Now I know a car that'll answer all the purposes of that clumsy oil tank of the Thompsons', and it wouldn't cost a third as much. She has a peach of a carburetor. Got the record for mileage on five gallons of gasoline, sealed tank contest. The judges couldn't reach the other cars by wireless when the Durable finished. Never heard of 'em again!"

"Now, Rae, here," Harkaway continued, gazing reproachfully at him, "wouldn't have a car, not even a Durable; says they cost too much; rather have a horse!"

Harkaway paused and then went on boldly, "I've been thinking, Mrs. Biddleston; I've been thinking—er——"

"Yes, Mr. Harkaway, you've been thinking, you said?"

Miriam's tone suggested that thinking was quite a novelty for Harkaway.

"I've been thinking," he repeated, not quite so boldly, "that—that——"

"I know, Mr. Harkaway," interrupted Miriam sweetly, cutting the Gordian knot with skill. "You've been thinking that you and Rae would buy a car together, and that I didn't know anything about it. Let me tell you that I was down town this afternoon and ordered the dearest, stunningest auto coat you ever saw."

"Ha: HA! ha HA!" guffawed Biddleston with a look of triumph. "Didn't I tell you, Harkaway?" Harkaway hated that laugh, with its accent on the second "ha"—"You remember what I said, Harkaway?"

"Yes, I remember what you said," Harkaway retorted hotly, though he didn't know just what was on Biddleston's mind at that minute—he was looking for a chance to get even. "It's easy enough to remember what

you said," he went on in a menacing manner. "You said that your wife would probably put a kibosh on the whole thing because it was too expensive, and then you invited me to come up here and make an ass of myself. You've tried to let on that I was doing this all of my own accord, when, as a matter of fact, it was just to please you that I consented to buy the dinky Durable affair that you insist on."

Mrs. Biddleson promptly wanted to know if it was a Durable that Mrs. Thompson had. Biddleson spoke up before Harkaway could stop him. "Certainly not, Miriam. Do you suppose I'm going to sink all that money in a car that is only good for town streets? Why, that car of Thompson's couldn't make the road to the bay if someone went along and brought the bay to it! *We're* going to have a machine that will run on any kind of a road. Harkaway and I wouldn't have any use for such a show window exhibit as that."

Harkaway had thought at first that Biddleson might better stop; but when he did stop he was evidently just as anxious for him to go

on, for Miriam looked right at him with the eye of a proprietor of a matrimonial bureau. "I should think you'd better be preparing for the future, Mr. Harkaway," she told him mildly. "It's all right for Rae here to get a car that is just good for going around country roads and enjoying oneself in; but I'd think you'd want something stylish you could take out somebody to ride in, and save hiring a horse and carriage. Rae is married and those things don't appeal to him, but for a young man I'd think a really handsome car would be a splendid investment."

"Hang it!" said Biddleston. "You talk as though I were an old man, Miriam. Why, I'm no older than you are, and Harkaway here——"

"Mr. Harkaway isn't married," Miriam interrupted sweetly. "And what he needs and what you need are two different-things." She turned pleasantly to Harkaway and went on, "Now, don't you let him impose on you, Mr. Harkaway. I think it's a shame for him to try and convince you that any old rattle-trap

will do you. As if you wouldn't want to take some nice girl out riding ever so often! And you couldn't do it, of course, unless you had a car that would look well."

"But this *is* a fine car," Biddleson put in. "Isn't that so, old man? Why, we picked it out because it was such a good, reliable, powerful machine and looked well; and was cheap besides."

Harkaway felt that he must help his friend out, so he said, "It isn't the price you pay that makes a handsome car, Mrs. Biddleson. Now Mrs. Thompson probably paid four thousand dollars for her big, ugly machine, while this car will only cost——"

The look on Biddleson's face stopped him. He could see at once that he had done wrong. Of course Miriam was to be convinced and converted, but he could discern from the agony on his host's countenance that the price was a forbidden subject. He tried to think of some way to change the conversation from the price but Miriam was waiting and finally remarked, fixing him with an expectant eye, "How much

did you say this car you've picked out will cost?"

Under such scrutiny Harkaway's mind refused to work and Biddleston looked entirely miserable when Harkaway said with what calmness he could muster, "Three hundred dollars."

Miriam rose to fetch a fresh pot of coffee and while she was gone Biddleston explained to his guest that he was an ass and if that was a sample of his good judgment and wisdom and sagacity he, Biddleston, was glad he had had sense enough to pick out his own car from the catalogue. "After telling Miriam that, I can see that it would be your nature to order a car without a carburetor or lamps," he said. "I wouldn't be at all surprised if, some time, you bought a four thousand dollar car and then painted it over with shingle stain to keep it from looking expensive. Now you've gone and told Miriam that that car will cost three hundred dollars when my share alone will be seven hundred. How am I going to explain now that I must spend seven hundred to buy

one half of a three hundred dollar auto? You are a chump, Harkaway."

Harkaway could not help feeling that Biddleson was right; though it occurred to him that Biddleson might better have overcome Miriam's objection himself without dragging him around to fix things up. When his hostess returned with more coffee and the cheese he cheered up and tried to think of some way of introducing the subject of automobiles again, with special reference to the variation in price from week to week. But Mrs. Biddleson appeared to have forgotten all about automobiles until the cheese had been enjoyed and the coffee pot looked into for the last time, to see whether there was the polite "drop left." Then she suddenly remarked: "Twice three hundred is six hundred dollars. Do you really think we can get a nice car for six hundred dollars, Mr. Harkaway?"

Biddleson looked so relieved that Harkaway said "Yes," and to avoid more awkward questions talked about six hundred dollar cars till Biddleson took him up on the subject of water-jackets, and said he didn't believe any manu-

facturer could afford to instal copper water-jackets, a good radiator and a decent pump in a six hundred dollar car.

"Are those the best things to have?" Miriam demanded suddenly.

Before Harkaway could thump his host on the knee Biddleson had got excited because he saw an argument coming and said decisively, "Nothing else is practicable. This air cooling is a mere subterfuge. Now on a hot day——"

"But I thought we were going to get a *good* car," Miriam interrupted. "You said it would cost only three hundred dollars and here you say you can't get a decent car for six hundred."

"Six hundred was the price we agreed on," Biddleson said weakly. "I told Harkaway I didn't see how we could afford to spend that much, even, on a car, but he said his judgment was better than mine, anyway, and if he thought it was a good investment to spend six hundred dollars on a Durable that ought to settle it for me!"

Miriam gazed thoughtfully at her husband and then at Harkaway. "You poor boys!" she said enigmatically.

CHAPTER III

BIGGS DEMONSTRATES THAT AN ACTIVE BAROMETER IS BETTER THAN AN ALMANAC FOR EVERYDAY USE

IT was a great day when the Durable arrived. To begin with, it came on a Saturday when Biddleson had a half holiday at his disposal. The timely arrival of the car, however, was not a matter left wholly to chance; it was the result of careful planning on the part of Biddleson, assisted by Biggs, the agent of the Tidewater Navigation Company. Biggs's office was opposite the bank and next to the post office. He had been very helpful in the affair and had taken an affectionate and unenvious interest in the shape, speed, horsepower and mechanical construction of the new machine as described in the catalogue, and discoursed upon at length, by its prospective owners. They decided that, for an Englishman, Biggs was a mighty good fellow.

The fact that the car didn't arrive until the Saturday a week later than it was expected didn't detract, according to Biggs, from the merit of Biddleston's plan. Harkaway had been as anxious as Biddleston about the car's coming and took occasion to drop into the bank two or three times a day to inquire for word of it. At first—when he knew that the Durable had passed Ogden—Biddleston was very decent about answering Harkaway's questions. But the Thursday after the Saturday that it should have come and didn't he utterly refused to talk about it. On Friday afternoon—having been rebuffed in the morning—Harkaway went into the bank, called emphatically for Biddleston and politely asked him why he hadn't had the car sent around the Horn while he was about it. "You've routed the car and tended to the freight agent and got a tracer after it, so far," he remarked pleasantly, checking off the items on his fingers, "and it's just occurred to me that you might have saved all that trouble by having it shipped by sailing vessel."

Having delivered himself of this agreeable suggestion Harkaway waited for Biddleson to say something he would be ashamed of afterwards. But the cashier refrained. He was showing an unusual amount of self-restraint, too, for every night when he got home he had to put up with careful, searching queries from his wife as to just when the car had been shipped, and if he were sure he hadn't made a mistake in the shipping directions, or why didn't Harvey Biggs telephone to Bones to see if it had come, or who was it that boxed it at the factory, and why didn't Rae write to him and ask him if they hadn't sent it somewhere else. Miriam was sure the moths would eat it (her coat, not the auto) all up before she had a chance to wear it, and she couldn't see why he didn't see somebody, and she was sure that something had happened to it (the auto), and further stated indignantly that if Harvey Biggs spent less time fishing in that old launch of his or out of the back window of his office, he would have more time to attend to business and could get something done for people once in a while.

Six times a day each of them—Biddleson, Harkaway and Biggs—telephoned to the agent at Bones, six miles up the bay where the freight and passengers took the tug, to know if the car had come. It was part of Biddleson's plan that the *Durable* shouldn't be carried on down to Deep Water, but should be put off at Bones and then brought down on the Tidewater Navigation Company's steamer *Richardson* the next morning. The *Richardson* was going to make a special trip, in fact, for the very purpose. Biggs had said that he would see to that. They would have telephoned oftener, but the agent at Bones got to know their voices and hung up the receiver when he found out who it was.

When Miriam announced, as she did every night, that she was going down to telephone to Bones herself in the morning, her husband went out and stood on the porch and gazed hopefully out to sea, looking for a storm that would make everybody glad that the *Durable* hadn't come. His barometer, however, obstinately marked 31.10 in spite of repeated and violent tappings. Once in his anxiety to

get results Biddleston almost broke the glass face of it. During all this time Biggs was properly sympathetic, and, what was better still, *his* barometer was more accommodating. According to that matchless instrument a gale was due almost any time, and as Biggs said to Biddleston, in a comforting way he had, "My dear fellow, if you have got anything around that house of yours out on Alki Point that's loose, you'd better tie it down, because there's a snorter coming that'll blow the bark right off the trees." When Biddleston told this to his wife, she said, unreasonably, "It would be just like those idiotic steamer people to load a valuable car on their leaky old boat and try to bring it down in a storm. I certainly hope they'll at least have sense enough to leave it at Bones till the weather settles." Be it known that Biggs's aneroid was the wonder of the non-seafaring population, the pride of Biggs himself and a source of consuming interest to the summer visitors at Tidewater. It always hung in the ticket office behind the wire-screened counter where no one but Biggs

could get at it. Other beaches have their lovers' lanes, their precipitous cliffs whence heart-broken Indians have jumped into the boiling surf, and other characteristic wonders. More widely advertised summer resorts have their incomparable climates, their "scenic attractions unsurpassed"; but Tidewater had Biggs's barometer.

Many were the tales told around bonfires on the beach at night, around firesides at home after the season was over, of the astounding gyrations of the needle of Biggs's record-breaking mechanical weather prophet. No one, from the owner of the livery stable to the most recent summer tourist, would dream of undertaking anything without first consulting Biggs. Energetic new-comers at the Bay View Hotel—an unassuming name afterwards changed by the owner, Thompson, to the Ferdinand Arms—those who wanted to go clamming, crabbing, or picnicking and wished to know what the weather would be like the next day were told by the noncommittal clerk of the hotel that they "had better see Biggs." For

example, if a stiff northwest wind and a low tide at 3 A. M. were essential prerequisites of success in getting crabs on the ocean beach, Biggs couldn't supply the tide, but he could furnish the wind!

"Yes, sir," he would say earnestly when his opinion was sought. "Couldn't be better. Steady as a rock." Here he would tap the face of the aneroid carefully. "Give you my word, needle hasn't moved a hundredth part of an inch in three days. Wind's from the northwest now, and it's bound to keep up. Better go in the morning, sir. Tide will be just right: one foot, seven-tenths minus. Very low, sir. Good lot of reef exposed."

It was the day on which the Durable actually arrived that an elderly individual, born and raised on the rocky shores of Maine, living inland for thirty years, had come purposely to Tidewater to get a sniff of salt air and renew the memories of early youth. Like everyone else, he came in to talk it over with Biggs.

"Glad you came in, sir," said Biggs heartily. Biggs, an Englishman, had been born within

sight of the sea himself and knew the longings of the man who hasn't the roar of the surf in his ears. "Glass has fallen half an inch in an hour. The last time it did that a sou'wester came up that blew the top of one roller clear over the light-house." Biggs gave the barometer a smart tap and the needle obediently moved down to 28.19. "Still going down," he said hopefully. "If you want to see what the Pacific can do in heavy weather, sir, go out to the shelter house at North Head. Perfectly safe! Stone house built by the city, plate glass windows and screened balcony. Follow the bay road till you come to Thompson's, then two turns to the—Don't know Thompson's place? You surprise me, sir; Mr. Thompson is the president of our principal bank. Finest place in Tidewater. Sort of mediæval, baronial mansion right on the shore of the bay; has a drawbridge over the moat, three windmills, two bath-houses, boathouse and a stone pier fifty feet long. The moat is only a little creek of course, but it does very well; only moat on the Pacific Coast, anyway. Castle has four

towers and a parapet. The walls are of cedar shingles, but they don't look at all bad, y' know. You may notice the gas-pipe screen for the ivy to climb up. Can't see the ivy from the road, but in a few years Mr. Thompson thinks it will be very beautiful. Couldn't miss it if you tried, sir. Only place like it in the world; red brick chimney on the west side of the castle; take two turns to the left after you pass the castle—'Devonshire Hall,' Mr. Thompson calls it—keep right along to the top of the bluff, and, if you hurry, sir, you'll make it before it rains."

The old man carefully buttoned his coat, opened the door and sallied forth bravely and joyfully into the teeth of Biggs's projected storm. His place before the altar of Vayu and Varuna, the great gods of wind and rain, was immediately taken by a young lady in a blue yachting suit with a red sweater tied negligently and gracefully around her waist. She patted her back hair carefully with an ungloved hand that displayed a flashing solitaire, readjusted the sweater so that it would hang

more carelessly and girlishly, smiled sweetly at Biggs and began:

“Now, don’t tell me, Mr. Biggs, that the weather is going to be horrid! Char—I mean, a friend is coming down on the train to-night, and I thought it would be just too lovely to meet him at Bones with the launch. It will be simply fine on Ferdinand Arm to-night in the moonlight, but mamma’s nose tickles, or she has rheumatism, or some silly thing or other is the matter with her, and she insists that something perfectly dreadful is going to happen. *You* don’t feel sick, or have asthma just before a storm, do you, Mr. Biggs?”

The sweet young thing paused, patted her back hair again, rearranged the sweater and gazed at Biggs anxiously.

“Really, I don’t remember noticing,” answered the agent of the Tidewater Navigation Company, laying aside his pipe and his cap in a careful British manner. “But if I had, I shouldn’t think of mentioning it. To be sure, I have my barometer, and it does splendidly in an emergency. I thought a bit back it

was going to storm, but perhaps the weather will change, after all. A-hem! let me see," he mused, giving the faithful instrument a tap. "I really believe you're quite right, Miss Jones. The barometer's gone up again; it's 31.05 now. Couldn't possibly get rough before to-morrow night! The train is due at Bones at seven o'clock. Our boat will be a little late this evening on account of an unusual amount of freight. If you leave Bones right after the train gets in you ought to beat the *Richardson* down. I'll tell Captain Jacobson to watch for you, Miss Jones, so that if anything happens to your engine, he will tow you in."

Not everyone had implicit confidence in Biggs's barometer. There was the captain of the *Richardson* for instance; he proceeded calmly back and forth on his daily trips between Tidewater and Bones wholly without concern for the fearful portents displayed by his superior's instrument. The master of the gasoline sloop *Albatross* came in and went out over the bar in blissful dis-

regard of Biggs's gloomy prognostications. And so with the other mariners whose craft plied the waters of De Poe Sound and adjacent seas. Their scepticism as to the accuracy of Biggs's barometer was complete, yet silent. None of them were curious as to why the readings of Biggs's glass didn't agree with theirs. They never presumed to investigate the inner workings of the instrument itself.

Perhaps they were deterred by the awful and legendary fate of one impious mortal. It is told in Tidewater with bated breath how a luckless summer visitor sneaked into Biggs's office while he was out, or jumped over the counter when he was in, or burglariously entered at night—armed with a screw-driver—and how Biggs got back just in time to catch him, and he transfixed him with an awful British glare, or how Biggs (these are the variations of the legend) happened to be fishing (unknown to the visitor) out of the office window in the dark and jigged him with a salmon hook, in the felonious act of examining the

aneroid in a post-mortem fashion, and finally—all stories agreed on this point—how Biggs refused to validate the visitor's return trip ticket and he was obliged to pay his fare back home.

The relation of this story had led to Harkaway's making Biggs's acquaintance. He felt sure such a man must be worth knowing; and he was. As time went on the acquaintance waxed into friendship and Harkaway was allowed to talk—in private—with Biggs about his barometer. In fact Harkaway was permitted to pay his respects to the remarkable meteorological results that Biggs could get with his aneroid, but that was as far as it went. Harkaway was not allowed to experiment with the weather himself. He never dared go nearer than three feet to that *objet d'art*.

It was half an hour after the sweet young thing with the back hair and diamond ring had departed that Harkaway went into Biggs's office to see whether he had telephoned to Bones that morning. Harkaway hadn't telephoned himself but he devoutly hoped that

Biggs had. Telephoning to Bones was become a hazardous proceeding, but Biggs, being an Englishman, went about such matters calmly and without any regard for what the other man might say. When he felt that it was right for him to do a certain thing he was never embarrassed for fear of possible criticism; or, if he were entitled to a certain privilege by law, custom or purchase, he believed that no sensible person would attempt to deprive him of it, least of all object if he asked for it. With these methods he usually succeeded, where an American, under similar circumstances, would stand abashed and suffer in silence.

It was even averred that once the Canadian Pacific had hauled an extra sleeper all the way from Fort William to Winnipeg merely because Biggs was entitled to a lower berth and there were none but uppers left; so the tale of one of Tidewater's citizens ran. It appeared that the few upper berths that were taken were inhabited by self-effacing Americans who had accepted them meekly enough,

although, like Biggs, they had been promised lowers. These pilgrims from the land of the free and the home of the brave, descendants it is true of determined forefathers who made of Boston harbour a gigantic teapot, but now, alas! the long-suffering, corporation-ridden Americans we all know, retired to an obscure place along the platform where no one could hear them or profit by their remarks, and individually and collectively, unanimously and fervently cursed the C. P. R., the Dominion Government, the climate, the days that they were born, and lastly and most fervidly of all a pompous Colonial official who had four sections and both drawing-rooms. Not so, Biggs! He was calmly telling the man at the window inside the station—for the fourteenth time—that the agent in New York had said he would telegraph for a lower berth “when I bought my ticket, don’t you know?”

“I am sorry, sir,” said the man at the window respectfully, “but I didn’t get the wire, and the lower berths are all taken. I can give you an upper in the middle of the car.

The ventilation is perfect, and you'll be quite comfortable, sir."

"But, my dear fellow, I cawn't sleep on a beastly shelf, don't you know!" objected Biggs.

"Very sorry, sir," answered the man at the window for the fifteenth time, "but your name wasn't on the purser's list and there is nothing left for you, sir." The man at the window referred to a notice posted conspicuously on the steamer from Owen Sound to Fort William which said that passengers for Winnipeg and further west, desiring sleeping accommodations on the train should leave their names with the purser.

"I don't know anything about the bally purser," said Biggs firmly. "The agent in New York said that he would telegraph for a lower berth when I bought my ticket, don't you know! Fahncy!" said Biggs, turning around and addressing the pompous Colonial official and the rest of his fellow countrymen who had gathered to assist Biggs even though they were plentifully supplied with lowers

themselves. "Fahncy!" repeated Biggs humorously, "Fahncy asking a purser on a boat for a berth on a train. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed his compatriots in unison.

"I am very sorry, sir," said the man at the window apologetically, but finally. "If I had a lower, you should have it, but they are all taken, sir."

"What's that?" demanded the pompous Colonial official who immediately took Biggs's place at the window. "I cawn't understand why my friend Mr. Biggs cawn't have a lower berth when the agent in New York said he would telegraph when Mr. Biggs bought his ticket, don't you know?" Biggs wasn't a friend of the official, but on such occasions all Englishmen are brothers.

"I will report this matter," continued the pompous Colonial official, severely. "I will write to Sir Wilfred Laurier! By Gad, I'll write to the *Times*, sir!!" The pompous C. O. stamped his cane in lieu of a gouty foot that would barely allow him to walk. "JEN-

KINS!" he thundered, turning to his secretary. "Make a note that I am to write to the premier of this beastly province and tell him what I think of him for allowing such an outrage. GET OFF MY FOOT! D——N YOU SIR!!" he shouted at Jenkins, who, in his anxiety to please had crowded in too close and trod on his employer's gouty pedal extremity.

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!" said Jenkins, backing away in great trepidation and writing rapidly in his notebook, "Get off his excellency's foot—beg pardon, sir—write to Sir Wilfred Laurier, sir—*Times*—outrage—man in New York telegraphed—when Mr. Biggs bought his ticket, don't you kn——" Jenkins closed his notebook in a respectful manner and returned it to his pocket with the remark, "Very good, sir. Thank you, sir."

"There's another car, sir, that might be put on the train," said the man at the window, now thoroughly alarmed. "I'll wire to headquarters for instructions."

"Very good, sir," said the pompous Colon-

ial official coldly. "Jenkins, write to Sir Wilfred Laurier and tell him I don't like his beastly climate."

"Thank you, sir," said Jenkins.

To return to the agent at Bones, Biggs called him up three times that morning, the first two times without eliciting a response. The third time Hammond, the American gentleman at the other end of the line, took down the receiver as soon as the bell stopped ringing and remarked fiercely and rapidly, "Yes, I know you are Biggs, agent at Tidewater. I also know that you are a blooming ass! I told you—I told Biddleson—I told Harkaway that when that gas wagon was here, I'd let you know. **DID YOU FORGET IT?**" Bang! went the receiver at Bones.

"But, my dear fellow," began Biggs at his end, "I——" when he realised that the other man had hung up, Biggs calmly returned his own receiver to the hook, took it down again, got Long Distance and called for Buxton, the agent at Deep Water.

"This is Biggs at Tidewater," he called.

"Well," answered Buxton indifferently.

"I've been talking to Bones," Biggs explained, "but something is the matter and I can't find out what I want to know. Would you mind calling them up for me?"

Biggs said "can't," not "cawn't." Fifteen years of life in America had eliminated all but a trace of his ultra-British accent. The variants he pronounced as all good Americans pronounce them, and on occasions, like the Fourth of July, out of respect to his environment, he even said "haf" instead of "half." Take it all in all, Biggs had shown great adaptability for a man of his nationality. But these were not the only changes that had taken place in Biggs. The characteristic apathy, the vacant stare of the average English Englishman had been replaced by an alert demeanour, and his blue eyes displayed a twinkle that would have been thought a symptom of insanity in his native land. All of which tends to show that an American Englishman may be an improvement on his British prototype and that under the proper stimulus a son of Albion can con-

duct himself like a wide-awake human being.

"Who do you want to talk to, and what do you want me to say?" demanded Buxton with some acerbity.

"Two friends of mine are expecting a shipment," Biggs explained. "And I want to ask Hammond about it."

"What was it?"

"An automobile."

"Where was it billed to?"

"Tidewater," said Biggs.

"Should have been billed to Bones," growled Buxton. "This office doesn't know of any such place as Tidewater. Instructions from headquarters are to bring freight for Tidewater here and hold at owner's risk. Who was it for, anyway?"

"Biddleston and Harkaway. Biddleston is cashier of the Farmer's and Fisherman's Bank, you know," Biggs went on.

"I'm not acquainted with the gent," snarled Buxton. "What did you say his name was?"

"Biddleston."

"Biddleston," repeated Buxton slowly, as

though trying to recall a name he had heard some time before. "Seems to me there's an automobile on the dock here for a Biddleson; been lying around here in everybody's way for a week. Had a good notion to heave it into the bay."

"My dear chap," demanded Biggs evenly, "why didn't you write to Biddleson and tell him it was there? He's been looking for it for a week."

"I didn't have to," snapped Buxton. "I wired him an hour ago to come and get it, or he'd lose it."

Of course Buxton's nasty manner wasn't personal to Biggs or Biddleson. It was the simple expression of his loyalty to Deep Water. Deep Water hated Tidewater and the history of their feud is written in the record of how the railroad didn't come to Tidewater, as it should have done (according to the citizens of Tidewater) and instead ran to Deep Water, the other side of Salmon Point, to the great gratification of Deep Water, which promptly advertised such a depth

of water as would float the very largest steamship in the world and pooh-poohed Tidewater as a sea port, alleging in print that it hardly afforded water enough at low tide to cover a small clam. Tidewater sniffed and dubbed Deep Water "Sahara," thus withering it instantly in its budding hopes of becoming a metropolis. Deep Water was in the dumps after this and failed to recover when it discovered that it was still off the map, so far as Tidewater was concerned. Tidewater, on one fork of the Y made by Ferdinand Arm, refused to go to Deep Water as the railroad terminus and established a steamboat line to Bones, at the head of the Arm. This proceeding short-circuited the current of passengers, most of whom never saw Deep Water and its unparalleled harbour and enormous capacity for the World's Trade and so forth, but got off the train at Bones, boarded the *Richardson* and were borne down to Tidewater whence they went their ways to the various parts of De Poe Bay. Consequently Buxton got mad every time he thought of Tidewater and as a pa-

triotic citizen of that deserted town he felt it his duty to sit upon each and every adherent of the lower town. As agent of the road, his duty in this regard was emphasised. And whenever he managed to unite his office of agent with his lofty position as citizen of Deep Water, his manner was overwhelming and it was a brave fellow who would try an issue with him.

“Oh!” was all Biggs said. He hung up the receiver, went over and consulted the barometer thoughtfully, crossed to a chair, sat down, lit his pipe and awaited calmly the march of events.

CHAPTER IV

A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT MAY BE FIERCE WHILE
IT LASTS

THE first to inquire whether Biggs had yet telephoned to Bones was Harkaway. He came in circumspectly, having observed a change in his old friend's manner of late. The customary twinkle in Biggs's eye had ceased to twinkle, a look of hostile, rigid imbecility had temporarily taken the place of his usual smile, a curious example of temporary reversion to a congenital type. At such moments, the humanising influence of a decade and a half in America seemed to Harkaway to be slipping off Biggs, as if he had lost his naturalisation papers. So, being determined to get to the bottom of the non-appearance of the Durable, and expecting Biddleson at any moment on the same errand, Harkaway paltered.

"Hello, Biggs," he said cheerfully, as though he hadn't been in an hour before.

“Any luck with the weather these days?” Biggs was non-committal.

“I wish you would fix things up old chap so that Bid and I can always have the wind at our backs when the car comes and we ride on the beach,” he went on, amiably. “You see, Mrs. Biddleson says we can’t smoke when the wind’s ahead; afraid the ashes will fly back. No fun riding unless you can smoke. Two taps will do it, just like this.”

Harkaway negligently took two steps towards the instrument as if to demonstrate. He stopped in apparent surprise, exactly on the right side of the dead-line across which no friend of Biggs’s would venture to step. “A-ha!” he shouted. “That’s what you’ve been doing, is it? 28.19, was it, you told that poor old guy? And now it’s above 31! You forgot to change the brass needle, old man, that’s all! Can’t fool me!—I saw the old party from Penobscot Bay going by a few minutes ago all toggged up in a slicker, a pair of gumboots and a sou’wester. I wondered what the matter was till he told me what your glass said.

Mentioned that he was going out to North Head to see the surf and watch the gale send the breakers tumbling across the reef. Asked me if I thought it would do much damage. Nice old fellow; shame to treat him like that. I had him out to Harkaway's Addition early this morning, and if he can see a real storm I'll bet he'll buy the whole place. But what the deuce'll you say when he trots back in the sunshine this afternoon, Biggs? You'll have to lie, that's what! I know it's against your principles but something has got to be done to keep his faith up. I can't afford to lose a sale."

Biggs refused to be angry and, on the contrary, was visibly pleased. At the suggestion of possible trouble, should the old gentleman return to the office and revile him, Biggs chuckled and looked over at his instrument with confident pride. "That barometer promises a storm," he assured Harkaway solemnly. "The moon changes to-morrow anyway, and I saw some Mother Carey's chickens on the reef this morning; they never come in unless stormy weather is approaching. Of course, they may

not have been Mother Carey's chickens, as I never saw any before but once—that was years ago, Harkaway—and it was just such a day as this in August, not a breath of air stirring, and the needle of my instrument here went down like the pointer of a steam gauge when the fire's gone out under the boiler. It couldn't go any further down. It hugged the bottom for four mortal hours—'pon my honour it did! Every boat in the harbour went up the Arm to get behind that bluff at Indian Shoals so they could be protected from the gale. Myself, I went out to the cliff beyond Thompson's to see the surf and I took a rope in case I should need it. I've seen some blows on the north coast of Devon, and a rope isn't a bad thing to have along when one finds oneself going inland faster than one can run. As I was saying, I went out to the cliff by Seal Rocks, and when I got there I heard a most peculiar noise from the hill back of the cliff. It was more than a noise; it was an infernal racket. It sounded like nothing so much as a million dogs barking at one cat up a tree.

“Of course, I knew there weren’t enough dogs in the county to make all that noise, but I didn’t pay much attention to it because I was in a hurry to get myself lashed to a big fir stump before the storm broke. Mind you, it was just as calm as it is this minute and it had been for twenty-four hours! When I had lashed myself to the stump where I could look down on the rocks I was never so astonished in my life. The sea was as smooth as a river. You know how the water is always dashing up the rocks and there are never less than fifteen or twenty seals sunning themselves on top. I looked again, and that was what surprised me; there wasn’t a seal in sight. You know that hill that I just mentioned the fearful noise came from is the highest spot around here. Well, I looked up and there were the seals, about a hundred thousand of them I should say. You see, every seal for twenty miles up and down the coast knew the storm was coming and had climbed up there to get out of the wet and was barking because some other seal was crowding him. I——”

"That'll be enough for you, Biggs," interrupted Harkaway, sceptically; "cut it out! I don't care to hear how the wind blew when it got started either! You can tell the rest of that story to the old man from Maine; he'll like it. Then, I'll sell him all Harkaway's Addition and throw in the hill where the seals were as a site for his house, eh, what? By George, here comes Biddleson."

Biddleson could be seen coming rapidly across the street. He rushed unceremoniously into the office and thrust an opened telegram under Harkaway's nose. "Just look at that!" he shouted passionately.

Harkaway suspected that the yellow paper referred to the auto, but he had wanted to get even with Biddleson ever since the dinner episode.

"Say, Bid," he said sweetly, ignoring all apparent excitement and utterly refusing to look at the telegram, "Biggs has just been telling me of a bully old storm he and his barometer pulled off some years ago. Now, there's an old chap here wants to see a storm

and buy some of my property, so if Biggs can just fix it up so——”

“*Fix it up!*” yelled Biddleson, trembling with rage. “Read that, I tell you, and then you’ll see how he fixes things! I had it all figured out that our car would get here last Saturday, when I had plenty of time to look after it. Biggs, the colossal ass, said he could fix it so the machine could be unloaded at Bones on Friday night and the *Richardson* could go up for it in the morning. Why, Biggs couldn’t fix one 4x5 plate with a whole barrel of hypo! He’s fixed his last fix for me.” Snapping his jaws viciously, Biddleson turned and glared at his erstwhile helpful friend in a most ferocious manner.

“You look warm, Rae,” Biggs said quietly, imitating Miriam’s voice with a slight lisp. “Sit down, dear, and tell us *all* about it.”

Biddleson sank suddenly into a chair, looked at the two men in a bewildered way and then got up again as suddenly as he sat down, madder than ever. He now shook the telegram in Harkaway’s face. “Read it!” he cried in a

rage. "Damn it, read it *quick!* Because the man that sent it is going to eat it!"

Harkaway took the message reluctantly and with misgivings. It was terse and characteristic of the relations existing between the citizens of Deep Water, alias Sahara, and those of its successful rival, Tidewater. It read:

Automobile here for Biddleson and Harkaway one week. Take it away or will sell to pay freight charges.

BUXTON.

After reading the telegram Harkaway silently handed it to Biggs. "They will have to ship it back to Bones," Biggs said in his most stolid British manner.

"Yes, they will!" Biddleson snorted. "Do you suppose I'm going up to that heaven-forsaken place three times? Once to argue with Buxton over the fact that it was the railroad's mistake? A second time to get him to reship it to Bones? A third time to show him that I don't have to pay the freight from Sahara to

Bones just because they carried it past? No, sir! We'll go right up now and bring it down ourselves, and tell him he doesn't get another cent of freight out of us; that's net!"

They already knew what the freight bill would be and had agreed that each would pay one-half of the one hundred and fifty dollars that the railroad gets for every auto shipped across the continent no matter, as Harkaway put it, "whether it's a two hundred pound runabout from Detroit or a ten-ton ice-wagon from France." But at this point Harkaway scented a fresh difficulty. "Look here, Rae," he said. "Remember it's past noon and your old bank is closed. Buxton won't take our checks and I know him well enough to know we shan't get our machine till we pay the freight. Have you got a hundred and fifty in your pocket? A twenty's all I've got."

Biddleston felt aimlessly in his pockets, and found a ten dollar gold piece and some change to match Harkaway's twenty. "We'll *make* him take a check, that's all," he declared emphatically.

"Buxton won't take a check, old man," said Harkaway pacifically. But Biddleson was obstinate. "He *will* take a check," he insisted. "Now let's go up and get it!"

"But, my dear fellow," interposed Biggs, "how are you going to do it? The *Richardson* is the only boat big enough to carry your auto, and she must make her regular trip to Bones to-night. You will have to wait till tomorrow and I'll order her up to Sahara for you."

This was a poser and they discussed the matter for some time till Biddleson had an idea. "Easy enough!" he said. "We'll just run up in a launch, take along a five gallon can of gasoline and run her home over the road. It isn't over twelve miles, anyway. We can make it in an hour."

"My dear fellow," Biggs objected, "how are you going to get over Salmon Point?"

Salmon Point was a rocky headland three hundred and fifty feet high that poked its foot into a hundred feet of water. The road went over the top. In England there would have

been a ledge cut around it, or a tunnel bored through it from the bottom. The fact that neither of these things had been done made the hill an almost insuperable obstacle in Biggs's mind. "You can't do it," he announced with finality.

"Salmon Point!" Biddleston snorted. "If the Durable can't go over that little knoll, we'll go back and make Buxton a present of it. Why, Biggs, that machine can climb a tree. And mud! The Durable with her big wheels will walk right through a bog that would mire a cow. Besides, all her weight is on the rear axles so she won't skid. No one ever heard of a Durable's skidding! Salmon Point Hill, nothing!" concluded Biddleston with deepest scorn. "Why, we won't know it's there."

"I don't know that it's not skidding is an advantage," Biggs remarked inanely. "There are some turns in that road from Sahara that a machine can't make unless she skids."

This was so evidently a surrender on Biggs's part that it was generously overlooked.

"Let's get started right away," Biddleston

urged. "My wife's gone off to make calls. We can slip away and get the machine and run her down here and surprise everybody. We won't say another word about it."

When Biddleson reached a point where he affirmed that no one "need say another word about it," argument was vain. Before he was married, Biddleson would have joyously discussed any matter with anybody and would have gloated and planned and entertained himself vastly. But after his marriage, people gradually came to know that when he had found a way of doing anything without saying another word, he intended to accomplish that thing without delay.

"You'd better take someone along to help you," Biggs advised. "Of course, you'll know just what to do, but Buxton may have got the men to put that auto 'way back in the freight house, or on top of the platform, or in a borrow pit, or have run it into a corner and piled wood in front of it. A good strong man will come in handy!"

Harkaway thought this was a good sugges-

tion, but Biddleston wouldn't hear of it at first. He seemed to think it was beneath his dignity to hire a man to go up with them. But at the last minute Biggs put on his coat and solved the problem by remarking, "Look here, old chap, I'll take you up in my launch. Then, if you need any help, I'll be there."

CHAPTER V

THE LADIES ARE PRESENT AT THE INITIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE DURABLE

IT was just low tide, and one hour later, when Biggs ran his launch *Spithead* up under the huge wharf that had been built for all the big vessels that never went to Sahara and Buxton was poking his nose over the edge to see who it was. He seemed ashamed of himself when he was recognised, as if he had imperilled his dignity by letting them know he had so little to do that he had to come down and find out what a launch was doing in Sahara.

Once inside the Sahara station Biddleson announced to Buxton, now behind his wicket, "We've come for the automobile."

Buxton assumed an air of careless relief. "Say, you fellows seem to think we're running a storage place up here," he said scornfully.

"I expect you'll find your package buried in the warehouse. We couldn't hold freight just for you."

"Certainly not!" said Biddleson quickly despite Harkaway's warning glance. "The six boxes of clams and three sacks of oysters that you ship weekly must have crowded an automobile clean out of the shed. But if you'd let us know that our shipping orders had been disobeyed——"

Here Harkaway stepped in and asked for the freight bill in as winning a tone as possible, to offset the effect of Biddleson's sarcasm. Buxton tossed it out, after pretending not to find it among three or four hundred bills which anyone could see were the train orders for the time since the road was built. "One hundred and fifty," he said with an air of boredom.

"We'll give you a check," Biddleson answered, carelessly drawing his check book out of his pocket. "Who'll I make it out to? Yourself or the company?"

Buxton carefully reached out for the bill and put it back among the train orders. "I don't

take checks from unknown parties," he announced crisply. "Come again when you have the cash!"

"But you know *me*," Biddleson protested. "I'm the cashier of the Farmer's and Fisherman's Bank."

Buxton became suddenly deaf, and closing his little gate, stared out of it with a look of polite pain. "Sorry, but I don't know you," he proclaimed. "I suppose you belong down the bay somewheres?"

Biddleson, ignoring this thrust, turned to Harkaway. "Wish I'd thought of this in time to cash it in town," he said sorrowfully.

"May be a store would cash it," Harkaway said hopefully.

"There isn't a store here that I ever heard of," Biddleson continued sarcastically. "And you've just seen that the agent hasn't a hundred and fifty dollars in his whole outfit! You see," he went on, enjoying his own sarcasm hugely, "the railroad runs these little one-horse stations just like the Government runs the post offices. When an office is too small

you can't buy a money order or cash one, because the business doesn't justify putting a responsible man in charge. And this Sahara station is the same way." He turned and smiled benignantly on Buxton who had opened the gate as though he contemplated squeezing himself through to talk with Biddleson. "This agent here," continued Bid, "isn't allowed to handle any sums over five dollars, probably, and when he receives any cash he has to send it right in to headquarters so they will know he's doing the right thing. Of course he isn't allowed to take this check, or any check."

"But he will charge us storage on the machine if we don't take it out," Harkaway interposed.

"No, he won't," Biddleson assured him, quite confidentially, as if Buxton were out of ear-shot. "We didn't know about this state of affairs, and it isn't our fault that this place is too small to transact business in the usual way. Besides, this agent here made the mistake of allowing the car to be unloaded here when it was billed to Bones."

As he ended, Buxton slammed the wicket and came out by the door. "Look-a-here, you fellows," he said as soon as he got close enough for them to see the rage in his eyes. "I've made a mistake, have I? Well, you'll make a mistake if you don't shut up. If you make another mistake like the mistake you've already made I'll throw you into the bay, and that won't be any mistake, either. I've stood all your lip I'm going to. If you want that dinky gas wagon, pay up! I don't know you, and don't want to," he concluded, turning to Biddleston; "I never heard of your darned bank and you needn't think for a minute that you can pass a worthless check on me."

"My dear fellow," interposed Biggs calmly, at this crucial moment, "if you don't think the cheque is good, I'll cash it myself." Just how Biggs managed to pronounce check so that it sounded as though it must be spelled cheque, it would be hard to say, but that was the way Biggs said it. Even the court stenographers spelled it "cheque," in shorthand when Biggs testified as a witness. He now dug down la-

boriously into a pocket wallet and brought up seven twenty dollar gold pieces and a ten. These he gravely exchanged for Biddleson's newly made out check.

"Now," commanded Biggs, looking at Buxton with an air of calm superiority, "my dear fellow, get us a hammer and a nail-puller." Buxton seemed for a moment to contemplate getting a gun instead, but he thought better of it and went off meekly enough for the tools. He knew Biggs and had heard of the sleeping car episode so he was aware that resistance would be useless.

They found the automobile resting in state in a large fat crate with endless cards tacked over it, bits of machinery peeking out, and what appeared to be a wash-boiler firmly strapped in the front seat. Harkaway had never seen any picture in the catalogue of an automobile with a boiler on the front seat and was at a loss what to think. Biddleson smiled confidently and remarked in an off-hand professional way, "I see they left us some assembling to do."

While they were waiting for Buxton to come back with the tools Biddleeson surreptitiously brought a catalogue from his pocket and consulted it. Harkaway detected the manoeuvre and promptly said, "What's that tub doing on the front seat?"

"Don't you see it's tagged?" his friend responded irritably. "Look at the tag and that'll tell you. It's the—the gasoline tank, of course."

"A gasoline tank without a lid strikes me as being mighty careless workmanship," said Harkaway, thrusting his hand in through the slats of the crate for the tag. "And it doesn't look like a gasoline tank, anyway. And why in the front seat, Bid?" At this moment Buxton returned and they fell to ripping off the boards.

An hour later Biddleeson got behind the Durable and pushed her carefully off the skids upon the floor. "There!" he said triumphantly. "She runs as easily as a baby carriage. Now we'll fill the tank and connect the batteries and go."

Harkaway had quietly possessed himself of the tag on the wash-boiler affair and found that it wasn't a wash-boiler at all nor a gasoline tank, but was the case that went under the machinery and caught what oil dripped down. The tag stated that it wasn't put in place because it might get bent there and the seat was a safer place for it to travel in. So now Harkaway said, "We've got to put this case on, Bid, before we go."

"That's easy," Biddleston answered carelessly. "Just crawl in under and put it on, if that's where it belongs."

Harkaway had never crawled under an auto before and it struck him forcibly that this wasn't the time to begin! He explained that he had always understood that it was bad form to go under a machine till you were certain it wouldn't run otherwise. So he refused. After arguing the question for some time Biddleston gave in. "Oh, well," he said, "we'll run back to Tidewater without it on. Who wants a case over the machinery, anyway? You have to take it off again whenever anything happens."

They found the opening to the gasoline tank and as there seemed to be some in it they decided not to put in the five gallons they had brought along just yet. Then they connected up the batteries and Biddleston assumed the responsibility of tightening up a good many bolts and loosening some others and generally showing that he knew all about a Durable. When everybody was at a loss what to do next Harkaway, backed by Biggs, suggested that it would be well to see whether she would run or not. So they took turns cranking till Buxton, now amicable, came over and wanted to know whether they hadn't better fill the lamps too. "You'll need them to see to work that handle pretty soon, and anyway it's getting near closing-up time and you'd better take that machine outside."

So they hauled it outside and cranked some more, till they found that it must be the gasoline that didn't feed—Biggs bringing his launch experience to bear—they discovered the stop cock and turned it on. When that was fixed and there was a fine, gassy smell all over

Sahara, Biddleleson climbed into the seat and told Harkaway to crank her again.

"You'd better point her the way you want her to go, first, hadn't you?" urged Harkaway.

"Nonsense," said Biddleleson airily. "Look how easily the front wheels swing when I push this lever over. Anybody can steer this machine. Now you just go ahead and crank. *Crank!*"

Harkaway saw that Biddleleson had a firm hold of the lever he was talking about. It had the appearance of the handle of an old-fashioned churn plunger, but he seemed to know what it was for, so Harkaway resignedly spit on his palms and turned the crank. It went over so suddenly that he just had time to jerk it away before the Durable swept him off his feet and started briskly off for the turn of the road to Tidewater. Biddleleson pulled frantically on the lever, but without apparent effect, as the Durable kept on going and was now a good two hundred feet away. At the last moment he stepped on the reverse pedal and the car started back with an awful roar just in

time to miss running down two ladies who stood in the road and shrieked.

By great good luck Biddleson managed to stop the machine's backward rush by standing on the brake. The Durable gave one or two spasmodic coughs, an ineffectual lurch, and came to a dead stop exactly as it was about to thrust the indomitable Biggs, who had his back against it, over the edge of the wharf and into the water. Biggs gingerly stepped out of his dangerous position and received Harkaway's thanks and congratulations calmly. "One more cough and you'd have smashed my launch down there," he explained.

At the end of the profound silence that followed this spectacular stop and Biggs's serene excuse for his heroic presence of mind, the two ladies gradually recovered their courage and approached.

Biddleson dropped the steering lever and called out hastily, masking his surprise, "My dear, you shouldn't get right in front of an automobile that way. I almost ran you down."

Harkaway stared and saw that it was Miriam, but not alone. He wondered who the tall and good looking young woman with her was. "Miriam is always picking up a new friend," he thought to himself.

"I thought it would be fine to come over the trail and meet you boys," Miriam said triumphantly, "I told Dorothy it would be just the thing and besides she didn't get her trunk last night and Captain Jacobson said it might have been carried to Sahara by mistake—you know they do that once in a while, Mr. Harkaway," she added, blithely ignoring the obvious fact that this very error was responsible for the presence of the Durable where it was.

Miriam, it could be seen, was in excellent humour and went on happily, "Captain Jacobson told us Mr. Biggs had brought you up here in his launch for the automobile and he thought we'd have plenty of time to get here before you started. And even if you did start before we arrived we'd meet you somewhere. Now, Dorothy, you get in the back seat with Mr. Hark-

away. Mr. Harkaway, help her in. Rae, which side do you sit on to run it? The right side? Well, help me in and I'll sit on the left side. Now when you get in, Mr. Harkaway, we're all ready and let's go. We'll be back just in time for dinner."

But Mrs. Biddleson had counted without Biggs. That individual now came up and remarked, "Glad to see you, Mrs. Biddleson. Bid, you've forgot that other case. Buxton says it's yours, too. I just looked in it and it seems to be wheels and a big buggy seat."

Biddleson seemed tremendously relieved and dropped the starting handle to the ground. "We clean forgot that rumble seat and the extra wheels," he exclaimed. "We must get them, Hark, and take 'em along."

"But where will you put them?" demanded his wife. "There isn't any room for them in the car and we must be home by six o'clock, Rae."

Dorothy cast a quizzical glance upon the discomfited Harkaway. "You see, you men came up here expecting to do all this quietly

and without bothering about us," she remarked. "And now we've taken quite the entire charge of the expedition. Do you feel very angry?"

Harkaway caught the mischievous gleam under the dark lashes and mustered all his politeness. "I'm sure we're exceedingly glad," he murmured. "But what shall we do with the rest of the stuff?"

"Leave it till to-morrow," said Mrs. Biddle-son promptly, settling herself back in the seat and brushing some excelsior from her skirt.

"I tell you what I'll do," said Biggs, looking intently at Dorothy. "I'll take that stuff back with me in the launch."

"Now that's what I call a good fellow," said Harkaway heartily.

"Well, if that's arranged," Miriam remarked, "let's be going on. Rae!"

Harkaway glanced at Biddle-son, smiled slightly and jumped in beside Dorothy. Then he leaned out of the tonneau and said loudly, "Bid, we're all ready!"

Biddle-son picked up the tools and looked savagely into the works and generally delayed

matters while Biggs and the now thoroughly tamed Buxton packed the contents of the other box into the launch. But he kept this up too long, for Mrs. Biddleson got worried suddenly and said, "Rae, is there anything the matter with this automobile? Is there? Why didn't you tell me there was?" She immediately prepared to climb out again.

"There is nothing the matter," he responded gloomily. "Only that dub that shipped it from Chicago had things mixed up so I have to look closely to see whether everything is all right again."

Here Dorothy leaned out again and said, "Rae, you can't fool me. I saw you running this machine not half an hour ago. You don't want to show off; and, besides, you're angry because Miriam and I are here. Why don't you let Mr. Harkaway have a try at it?"

"No, really," said Harkaway hastily. "I actually know nothing about this car. Bid is the boy! Climb in, Bid, and show the ladies how nicely it runs." With this he settled himself firmly in his seat, secretly prepared to jump for his life, as soon as occasion arose.

CHAPTER VI

BIDDLESON ENLARGES HIS KNOWLEDGE OF MECHANICS

WITH an air of hopeless martyrdom Biddle-son got in after solemnly cranking the engine and handing the handle up to Harkaway as though it were a last keep-sake and he must carry it in his lap and never again lose sight of it no matter what happened. Then he firmly took hold of the lever that controlled the destinies of the Durable. His lips moved as he cautiously depressed the whole business, which, the book of instructions said, was the proper manœuvre to put the low gear into commission. This was correct, but he had his heel on the reverse pedal—he hoped it was the brake—and there was a loud, harsh buzz under the seat and the machine remained motionless except for some apparent excitement in the interior. Bid hastily restored the lever to the “first position” and carefully and anxiously

pulled the handle toward his chin. This time he got results, but of a different character. His foot still being on the reverse pedal the Durable started backwards towards the edge of the wharf.

When it was stopped and Harkaway had cranked the engine again and Biddleeson had assured Miriam that his foot was off the reverse pedal, Harkaway climbed in and Biddleeson pulled the churn-handle up and the Durable slowly gained momentum. Then it cheerfully tuck-tucked away towards the turn in the road while Miriam smiled sweetly and Dorothy said, "What a lark if he missed the turn!"

She said this at exactly the right time, and Biddleeson and Harkaway both got out to pull the car out of the brush and straighten it out so that when it was started again it would have plain sailing. As Harkaway climbed back into the tonneau Dorothy gave him a look that seemed to congratulate him on his silence. He returned this glance as haughtily as possible and she laughed outright.

"What in the world is that child giggling at?" Mrs. Biddleson demanded softly, nudging her husband's arm.

"Don't touch me!" Biddleson snorted, jamming the lever down and putting on the brake. This manoeuvre—the brake seemed to take hold with its teeth—resulted in Mrs. Biddleson's leaning over directly in the line of her husband's vision. When she recovered her balance and the car started on again, Harkaway made stealthy motions to Dorothy to inform her that this was no season for remarks of any kind. She seemed rather astonished but was silent.

The first mile was made in good style. Another mile was traversed with equally brilliant results.

At last they came to Salmon Point Hill, and ominously steep it looked. Biddleson gave one glance at it, then stopped the car abruptly.

"Why do you stop, Rae?" asked Miriam, plaintively, "I thought we were going beautifully just then."

"Question of gear," replied Biddleson, with

a crushing air of knowledge. "Say, Hark," he went on eagerly, "what do you think of taking it on the high to test her out?"

"The low is surer," said Harkaway, dubiously, glancing about him as if searching for a good place to jump. "When we know the machine better, perhaps——"

"What do they mean?" inquired Miriam, in an audible aside to Dorothy. "Do you believe they know anything about it?"

Dorothy giggled.

"Oh, rot!" was Biddleston's answer to Harkaway. "I know this machine all right. The catalogue says she can eat up all kinds of hills on the high, so here goes!"

With an air of confidence he manipulated the handle, properly this time, and the Durable started up with painful slowness. Soon a loud knocking under the seat announced that the engine was all in; almost immediately that mechanism ceased its laboured movements, and died.

"This is where I get out," said Dorothy, promptly leaving the car. Harkaway fol-

lowed her, and from the vantage ground of a wayside rock parleyed with Biddleson, who was still determined to use the high gear to mount the hill. "The catalogue says——" he began again. "Bother the catalogue," said Harkaway, "I know the low is better!"

"What's the matter with the intermediate?" demanded Biddleson, quickly turning over the pages of his catalogue. "Er—that is, I guess you're right, old man," he went on, hastily, observing that the Durable had no intermediate gear.

Harkaway, with exemplary patience, cranked the machine once more, and followed Dorothy into the tonneau.

To get the low gear into operation, according to the book of instructions, one should press a button in the middle of the churn handle and then slowly but firmly thrust the whole works towards the centre of the earth. That sounded quite easy, so Biddleson released the brake and pressed the handle with great firmness, but forgot to put his thumb on the button. The handle stayed where it was; the

Durable retired inexorably down the hill, the engine racing madly. In his excitement Biddle-son jerked the handle almost out by the roots and then everything stopped, and Mrs. Biddle-son discovered the wash-boiler, which had been stowed on the foot-board, right against her feet. "Of course it won't go up the hill when this thing isn't on," she said.

This interested Dorothy and she leaned over to inspect it and inquired what it was. Harkaway told her it was to screw on under the engine to keep the dust out and the oil in. "Then it wouldn't help us up the hill," she said. "For it would be useless unless the engine was going. And the engine has stopped."

This was not to be denied and even Biddle-son acknowledged that there was nothing to do but crank the engine again. Harkaway got the crank and tried to turn it. It wouldn't turn. Biddle-son looked over his shoulder at him. "By jove! you've bent it," he said.

"I didn't," Harkaway replied angrily.

"Well, it won't go," said Biddle-son, as though that settled it.

At this moment Miriam took hold of the churn handle to assist her in rising out of her seat. In doing so she pulled it downwards and thus released the high speed clutch which Biddle-
• dleson had set in his frantic efforts to do something a few minutes before. This freed the engine and the car dropped backwards.

"There!" said Dorothy, when she had stuck a block of wood under the rear wheel and the Durable was stationary again. "Aren't you glad we got out?"

Biddle-son said nothing but got out, too. "I think you'd better get in and hold things while I see what the matter is, Hark," he said.

"Hold nothing," Harkaway responded, glaring into the now fast declining sun. "If you think she's going to start, sit on that block of wood to keep her from going back-
wards. *You* can make a noise like the Rock of Gibraltar, if you want. I'm going to smoke a cigarette." He retired to a grassy bank by the roadside to smoke and watch Biddle-son get busy with the works. The crank seemed to be the only thing that had

netted positive results, so he began with that. He carefully inserted it in the hole provided for it on the starboard side of the Durable, gave it a mighty push, and to everybody's huge surprise and his own proud delight the Durable's three cylinders took hold at once and buzzed in a loud and agreeable way suggesting speed, power and presently the top of Salmon Point Hill.

"I thought so," said Bid importantly.

"Well, why didn't you say so, then?" asked Miriam with some asperity.

Biddleston didn't answer this question; he couldn't. Silently they all climbed back into their seats and arranged themselves comfortably while Bid experimented with the button in the handle. Slowly—and properly, this time—he depressed the lever. They could all feel the friction band take hold and hear the harsh grating of the low speed gears getting down to work. The Durable calmly moved forward away from the block of wood that Dorothy had left under the wheel. This majestic progress was continued for at least six

inches when the car stopped again. Something unusual was happening in the mechanical department of the Durable. "Mercy!" screamed Miriam, who had gone through the San Francisco earthquake. "What on earth is that?"

The whole party felt three distinct seismic shocks. The Durable moved forward and backward with an undulating movement. The first shock took the car forward a half-inch, then they slipped back to within four inches of the block; the next shock enabled them to recover a quarter-inch of the distance lost; the third shock was weaker and unimportant and the Durable returned permanently to anchorage. Without a word, Miriam jumped out of the car. "No one could tell what the thing was going to do next," she explained later with much dignity. The rest were more deliberate, but disembarked. Harkaway retired again to his seat on the bank to soothe his troubled nerves with nicotine. Biddleston, pale but game, took the wrench from the pocket where he carried it, gathered up the crank and

the oil-can that they had evidently intended to leave on the spot as a trophy and bravely attacked the silent Durable.

He first removed the cushioned front seats that hid the engine from view. Miriam took one and Dorothy appropriated the other, and they joined Harkaway by the roadside. Biddleson then removed the detachable tonneau and jacked up the front wheels before he thought to take off his coat. It occurred to him while he was hunting for his pipe that he was not only warm, but he was mussing up his coat; so he took it off and lit his pipe. He smoked thoughtfully and deliberately as he surveyed the various parts of the Durable that cluttered up the highway.

"Why doesn't he do something?" said Mrs. Biddleson impatiently, as if her husband hadn't done too much already. As a matter of fact Biddleson was stuck. He couldn't think of anything else to do except putting the things back again and that he didn't wish to do because it would have made his original performance seem purposeless.

“Rae is quite a machinist,” remarked Dorothy to the inscrutable Harkaway. “Isn’t he?”

“Yes,” Harkaway answered lazily. “Most energetic and competent, too. I couldn’t have taken that tonneau off in half the time. I wonder, though, what he’ll do next. I suppose he’ll crank it.”

Sure enough, Biddleston cranked it. And while he laboured over that device Harkaway reclined at his ease in the shadow of the hill and smoked. Below—not very far below to be sure, because they hadn’t attained any great altitude yet—lay beautiful De Poe Sound glittering in the sunshine. Back in the direction of Sahara, Biggs could be seen coming slowly but surely with the launch. With him, besides the wheels and rumble seat, was the five-gallon can of gasoline that Biddleston had ordered Harkaway to empty into the tank of the Durable. Harkaway now remembered with a sinking heart that he had forgotten that important ceremony and it was clear to his mind that what had brought them

thus far on their way was only the cupful or so left in the machine at the factory. He wisely concluded to say nothing of his neglect until Biggs with their five-gallon can came within hailing distance.

Why, he asked himself cannily, should he bring down on his head the wrath and scorn of the whole party to no purpose? When Biggs arrived it would be time enough, and possibly he could manage to lay the blame on Biddleson. The scene was one of peace and quiet—peace, except for Biddleson's mad labours with the crank and Mrs. Biddleson's very proper anxiety regarding the dinner which, she was sure, would be spoiled, and her frequent questions as to why Rae didn't turn the crank the other way.

It suddenly occurred to Harkaway that he didn't know who the girl by his side was. She was evidently a very close friend of Mr. and Mrs. Biddleson. It was just as evident that she wasn't Miriam's sister, for Miriam's sister was only a little girl and they called her "the babe" and "the kid." Hadn't Bid no

more than a week ago remarked that his sister-in-law was in a school in the East "growing up"? He determined to devote the brief leisure at his disposal to finding out who Dorothy was. A Sherlock Holmes would have solved the mystery by asking at once, but Harkaway preferred to be more subtle.

"Biddleeson isn't a bad sort when you know him," he began, turning to Dorothy. "Really, he's quite mild-mannered and polite, even if you shouldn't think so just now." At that moment Bid was up on his feet and stamping the ground in a fearful rage because the crank had slipped and he had gone down with it and bumped his head on the way.

"When I know him?" queried Dorothy, as though she didn't understand.

"Yes," said Harkaway, in enthusiastic approval of his friend. "You should see him in his proper environment, in all the glory of his glad rags, presiding with grace and dignity at a public banquet, or smiling genially at a quiet little dinner at home. He presents a much better appearance, too, with a carving knife in

his right hand and the fork in the other than he does with an oil-can in his right fist, a monkey wrench in his left and a smudge of grease across his forehead, to say nothing of a grievous desire to swear. Bid is labouring under certain disadvantages that don't often occur and some day you'll recall with wonder this painful scene."

Biddleston *was* labouring under disadvantages. He was back at work with the crank, but was savagely turning it the wrong way in response to an insistent demand from his wife that he try it just once. She had gone over to see that he did it, and stood by, awaiting results and silently approving her own resourcefulness.

"I suppose you've known Mrs. Bid longer than you have her husband," continued Harkaway, hoping that Dorothy would say something that would give him a clue to her identity.

"Is it possible you don't know who I am?" Dorothy was about to say, but didn't. Instead she remarked hesitatingly, "Ye-e-es, I've

known her a little longer. I suppose you've known them a long time."

"Known 'em always," answered Harkaway. "I can't remember the time when Bid wasn't bothering around. And Mrs. Bid, why, when she was a little girl I used to hold her on my——" Harkaway stopped. The idea of his holding Mrs. Biddleeson on his knees even when she was a little girl seemed preposterous all at once.

"No one can tell me anything about the De Poes," resumed Harkaway, speaking rapidly to cover his confusion. "Knew 'em all: grandfather, grandmother, uncles, cousins and aunts, her—a——"

"You know her sister?" interrupted Dorothy, guilelessly.

"Sister!" echoed Harkaway. "Why, of course. She—a—she's—Why, to be sure," he stammered, racking his mind for some fact regarding Mrs. Biddleeson's sister. "Yes," he said, "I know her well. Too well, if anything," he added, a faint recollection coming to him. "Beastly little nuisance," he went on

as the memory became clearer; "short dresses, long hair, black eyes and acted as if she knew everything. She's away at school somewhere. Lord, I hope she'll never come back! You know Miriam talks of marrying her off to me, but I guess not! They used to call her—used to call her——"

"Dolly!" called Mrs. Biddleson opportunely, as though to assist Harkaway in groping for the name. "Dolly, dear, come here a minute!"

"Yes, they used to call me Dolly," said Dorothy haughtily. "And I'll try, Mr. Harkaway, not to be a beastly nuisance and I promise faithfully not to marry you." She got up from the auto seat as gracefully and with as much dignity as she could, and stalked stiffly across the road to her sister.

"That's another time I was an ass," thought Harkaway miserably. "So that's the 'baby' Bid said Miriam would marry me to only she was too young. It's all off now, anyway," he reflected in great gloom. "She wouldn't marry me in a thousand years! I'll get even

with somebody for this. Bid got me into this mess and I'll *fix* him. If it wasn't his fault about that gasoline, it won't be mine—I'll make sure of that!"

"Say, Bid!" he called as he walked across the road to the dismantled Durable. "I'll bet money you turned off the gasoline that last stop you made. Turn it on again and perhaps she'll run."

"I never touched it," said Bid indignantly.

"She was going all right up to then, wasn't she?" demanded Harkaway.

"Yes," Biddleston admitted doubtfully.

"Well, why isn't she going now?" insisted Harkaway. "You turned off the gasoline, that's what you did."

"I say I didn't turn it off," said Biddleston angrily. "It's on now, and you can see for yourself if you don't believe it."

"Sure enough," agreed Harkaway, after giving the valve apparently a careful look. "But I can't see why she won't go! You've done everything there is to be done except take off the wheels and remove the transmission

gear and I'm sure you've made some mistake about the gasoline. The best car ever built won't run without gasoline, you know."

"Perhaps there isn't any gasoline," suggested Dorothy.

"Gasoline!" snorted Biddleston. "We've got five gallons in the tank. Harkaway knows that because he put it in himself, that is, unless he forgot."

"Me!" exclaimed Harkaway with a great show of indignation. "You needn't think you can blame *me* because I didn't put gasoline in the tank. *You* are the one who didn't put gasoline in the tank. You can't deny that!" This accusation was so obviously a fact that Bid didn't even attempt to deny it. Nevertheless, he wasn't quite satisfied with the position that Harkaway had got him into. "Didn't I tell you to fill the tank?" he said harshly.

"You told me to fill the water tank," replied Harkaway evasively. "You don't suppose I put the gasoline into that, do you? While I was carrying the water I heard you fussing

around because you couldn't find a tin funnel and a chamois skin rag. No one but a blooming chump would go to that bother unless he intended to use 'em."

"I couldn't find 'em either," said Biddleson gloomily.

"Then we haven't any gasoline," Harkaway said with conviction.

"Let's look," said Bid. He unscrewed the cap, leaned over and peered into the long cylindrical hole anxiously. "You'd better look, Hark. I couldn't see any. My eyes are getting weak, though," he added hopefully.

Harkaway looked carefully into the darkness of the tank, slowly and silently screwed the cap on again, lit a cigarette, climbed into the detached tonneau reposing by the roadside, its front facing the water like a gigantic scoop shovel, sat down and gazed meditatively at the mountains on the other side of the bay.

"Well, why don't you say something?" demanded Mrs. Biddleson impatiently.

"There isn't even a smell," he announced and relapsed into silence.

"What are we going to do?" she asked in despair.

"There's Biggs; perhaps he has some," suggested Harkaway.

"*Who* is Biggs?" inquired Dorothy, with interest.

"Yon is Biggs!" Harkaway answered, pointing dramatically at the approaching launch, which, loaded to the guards with the four extra wheels, the rumble seat and the red, brass-bound trunk, looked like a carriage factory at sea.

"Hi, there! Biggs!" shouted Biddleson.

"Harvey!" called Mrs. Biddleson shrilly.

"Mr. Biggs!" ventured Dorothy, not so loud.

The launch, coughing steadily, ran in to shore, poking her nose softly into the sand. Biggs stepped carefully out, and climbed up the bank, bringing with him the five gallon can of gasoline which he silently handed to Biddleson. He lifted his cap politely to Mrs. Biddleson and, without looking at Dorothy, went back and got into his boat.

"Thanks, old man," Harkaway called.

"Don't mention it," Biggs answered. "I thought you might need it."

"Useful, but not at all sociable, it seems," said Dorothy, piqued by the fact that the rather handsome Englishman hadn't noticed her. "Who did you say he was?"

"I didn't say," replied Harkaway. "But he is the owner of the only well trained barometer in America, the agent of the Tidewater Navigation Company, an English gentleman who won't even look at you until he is properly introduced. I will present him in due form when next we meet."

"But you haven't met me yourself," objected Dorothy, lightly.

"No," Harkaway returned. "But I knew your grandfather, grandmother, your cousins, uncles, aunts and—and——" He hesitated, looked at Dorothy, saw a gleam of forgiveness in her eyes and concluded, "and little Dolly, who was really a clever and interesting child and has grown into a lovely woman."

"That's better," laughed Dorothy. "I ac-

cept your apologies. Let's get into the car and show them how to run it." She climbed into the front seat of the reassembled Durable and smiled down at him. "Come on," she said.

Harkaway didn't know much about it, but he concluded that Biddleson had distinguished himself sufficiently, so he climbed in just after Biddleson had cranked the engine (this time with complete success) and to his great delight the Durable moved forward and they went gaily and easily up the hill, pretending all the time not to hear Bid shouting behind until they reached the top.

CHAPTER VII

A RIDE IN MRS. THOMPSON'S CAR

WHEN Biddleston and his wife came up they were too tired and out of breath to do more than climb into the tonneau and glare speechlessly at the occupants of the front seat, who didn't mind it much, because their backs were turned.

All went well until they finally reached the ferry landing. Tidewater lay on both sides of Ferdinand Arm and the quickest route to Biddleston's home was by way of the scow-like ferry that made voyages as often as a passenger appeared. The landing was merely a bit of gravel at the end of the road and here Harkaway stopped to wait for the boat, which was just coming across.

When it finally swung up to the tug of the cable that kept it on its course, and the apron had been let down, Harkaway started to run

the car up on the deck, but the ferryman stopped him. "You've got to obey regulations," he said, "and stop your engine, turn off your gasoline and disconnect your batteries."

Biddleston recovered his voice long enough to inquire, "What for?" So the ferryman took him into the little cabin and showed him a long list of rules about automobiles and made him pay a dollar for fare. After this they were all right and the ferry started splashing back to Tidewater West, as the maps called it.

While they were going across Dorothy remarked that the tide was pretty low and they would have to climb a very steep bank on the other side to reach the road. The ferryman seemed to think this a reflection on his boat, but Dorothy explained that it wasn't at all; she meant that they had had a slight difficulty in getting up a hill and that she was merely wondering how they were going to get the car off the boat, "especially as you won't allow us to start our engine till we get ashore."

The ferryman apologised for this and said

that the Government made the rules about such things and that he couldn't help it.

"But you don't mean that we must push this automobile off the boat and into the wet sand before we start it up?" she demanded.

"Yes, ma'am, them's the rules," was the reply. "But I've got a block and tackle that I use for hauling heavy wagons off the boat and up the hill when the tide is low and the teams can't pull 'em up," he said. "We'll hitch that line to your automobile and then I'll back the boat out. That'll pull you right up, for I'll tie the other end of the line to the ferry boat."

This gratified Biddleston greatly, though Mrs. Biddleston seemed doubtful whether it was a fitting entrance into town for a brand new car. When the ferry pushed her nose into the sand on the other side, Bid called that it was time to get out and push. He and Harkaway put their shoulders to the rear of the Durable and it ran off the ferry and stuck on the apron, with the front wheels deep in the sand.

Then the ferryman hitched on his tackle to the front axle and backed his boat away and the Durable came to a second standstill with its rear wheels in two feet of water. For as soon as the ferryboat backed out and hauled on the line that went up the hill and down again to the car, there appeared a gap between the boat and the shore which the Durable filled with exactitude.

"Now you've done it," said Miriam, gazing wildly over the side and waving her hand at her husband.

Even the ferryman was sorry. "But the tide's coming in," he said comfortingly. "And you'll float off pretty soon."

"Why don't you keep on backing?" Biddle-son demanded wrathfully. "Go on and pull it out on the dry sand."

"You're sure it won't hurt anything?" the ferryman asked.

They all assured him that the damage was done, so he started his wheezy engine and the paddle wheels revolved and very slowly the Durable emerged from the water and came to

rest at the foot of the steep little bluff that marked the top of high tide. Mrs. Biddle-son promptly got out and Biddle-son and Hark-away took turns at cranking the engine. But they found it wouldn't go, on account of something or other.

After they had blistered their hands turning the handle, Dorothy, who was seated comfortably in the car, suggested a horse. She was tired, she said, of staying in one place so long.

"Oh, we'll get it to going pretty soon," they assured her.

"I'm glad of that," she answered, "for the tide is coming in fast and it's getting dark."

Harkaway did not object to the darkness, for he knew that several people who had looked down and seen the Durable planted in the sand had only refrained from stopping to help because it was dinner time. He felt sure they would be back after dinner and try to be helpful with advice. But in the dark they might not see the car and go past. He wondered anxiously whether there were a moon. At this moment he discovered that the wash-boiler was

floating off by itself on the rising tide which was again lapping the rear wheels of the Durable. Biddleston saw it, too, and started to wade out to sea to retrieve it. And in the meanwhile Harkaway found out what was the matter. He did this through an inspiration which came from Dorothy. "There's water in the carburetor," she whispered, leaning over.

"How do you know?" he demanded, welcoming the information, but rather resenting its source.

"Never mind," she answered succinctly. "Get it out."

And get it out he did. "Now," commanded Dorothy imperiously, "crank her."

The Durable gave a short, asthmatic cough, and then another a little clearer. The third gasp shooed all the remaining salt water out through the muffler and the three cylinders settled down to a rhythmic hum. One of the main excellent features of the Durable was the fact that the gasoline tank, the carburetor and the other fixings of an inflammable character were placed very low—lower than the en-

gine, to be explicit—so, the manufacturer explained, if the gasoline did happen to leak it would fall on the ground and not on the hot engine, thus reducing the danger of fire to a minimum. While this was very good, it allowed the air-intake to suck in water when the Durable's rear wheels were partly submerged.

"Don't do that!" said Harkaway sharply to Dorothy, who had her hand on the churn handle, perilously near the safety button.

"Don't do what?"

"Don't touch that button. If you do she'll start."

"Will it go if I push it?" inquired Dorothy innocently.

"Yes, and if you push down that handle."

"Well, good-bye," she cried gaily. "I'm going. Don't lose the crank." She released the safety button, confidently pushed down the lever until the low gear engaged and opened the throttle by twisting the handle. The Durable moved forward freely and easily, and with her engine purring like a cat, slid up the steep bluff, swept by Mrs. Biddleson who stood

screaming with astonishment and terror. "Jump! jump! Dolly! Jump!" she cried.

But Dolly didn't jump. Instead, she skillfully turned to the left and down the street. They could hear the honk-honk of the horn as she disappeared around the corner by the bank.

"Once more I was an ass," said Harkaway ferociously. "That girl knows more about an auto in a minute than I do in a week." Twirling the now useless starting handle savagely he waded ashore in water now ankle deep.

"She will get killed!" wailed Mrs. Biddle-son.

"No, she won't," Harkaway assured her. "She has probably gone home to rescue the dinner."

"Rae!" called Miriam, feeling that she ought to be sorry about someone. Her husband was carelessly splashing through the water, having rescued the drip-pan. "Come out of the water at once, you'll catch your death-of-cold."

Just what a death-of-cold is, has never been

accurately defined. It seems that when one has a mere tickling in the nose, or even a deep, cavernous cough, or, perhaps, a large doctor's bill to pay, to say nothing of the undertaker's fees and the florist, he has caught his death-of-cold. Anyway, Biddleson had had a number of deaths-of-cold and survived them all, so he was in no hurry to obey his wife's instructions to "go straight home and take off those wet things." He came stolidly ashore and the three of them started gloomily on their long walk to Alki Point, beyond the Thompsons', where the Biddlesons lived.

They formed a dismal procession as they went single-file down the business street of West Tidewater, Mrs. Biddleson in the lead, walking with great dignity and social poise in case she should meet any of Tidewater's élite; Harkaway next, caring nothing for the ee-lites, as he chose to term them, reviling himself for being such a chump in Dorothy's eyes; and Biddleson, dripping wet and bearing the wash-boiler drip-pan pressed firmly to his breast and at every step anathematising the

Durable, the manufacturer of the Durable, the ferryman, the waters of De Poe Sound, and all the De Poes from Ferdinand de Poe, the founder of the line, down to Dorothy de Poe, youngest representative.

On ordinary occasions Biddleson would have cared little for the prospect of the three mile walk around the side of Mary Jane Bay (named after one of the early De Poes, and renamed Marie Jean by one of the later De Poes) to his home at the harbour entrance. Indeed, he would have enjoyed it. It had been a daily and pleasurable performance since he had rented the house in the spring, to cover the distance after banking hours, mostly afoot, or, when he was late, on his bicycle, or occasionally by riding across in the Thompson launch to the stone pier that graced the water front of his employer's baronial mansion. But to-day, of all days, the day he had looked forward to, Biddleson even in thought couldn't keep up with the emotions that surged within him.

Miriam's great hope, as she walked on ahead, was that she wouldn't meet Mrs. Thompson, or,

if she did, that that social usurper would not, in the darkness, notice her untidy retinue behind.

No sooner had the thought of Mrs. Thompson crossed Miriam's mind than she heard the musical tremolo of the triple horn on Mrs. Thompson's car. This was followed immediately by the blinding glare of the two acetylene lights which shone on the Biddleson party and made them as conspicuous and picturesque as a week's washing in the front yard on a moonlight night. Mrs. Thompson signalled her chauffeur to stop.

"Why, how funny, Miriam," she said. "I was just thinking of you." Which wasn't true, Miriam asserted quickly to herself; Mrs. Thompson thought of nobody but her own self. But she answered calmly, "I was thinking of you, too."

"How sweet of you, dear, to think of poor me! I often envy you your little cottage on the cliff with the lovely view and no servants to annoy you. My house is such a care and I have so much trouble with my servants."

The fact that Mrs. Thompson had servants

was well known in Tidewater entirely apart from her constant reference to them. There was Larkins, the butler, and then Tompkins, the gardener (his name was Thompson, but on the payroll of Devonshire Hall he was written Tompkins), 'Arriet, the upstairs maid, all from England, a part of the decorations of the baronial mansion, as it were. From Paris came Henri, the chauffeur, and Suzanne, Mrs. Thompson's maid.

"Would you believe it possible?" continued Mrs. Thompson. "Last night Tompkins neglected to close the drawbridge and a number of cows belonging to that horrid milkman across the road came in and walked all over our garden and tramped down the flower beds." Mrs. Thompson's garden was of the English variety, a yard with flowers around it. "I thought," went on Mrs. T., "that when Tompkins came from England he would know a drawbridge and what it was for. So stupid of him, I'm sure."

Mrs. Thompson had some difficulty in saying "I'm sure" properly—as Biggs would

have said it, for instance—because she talked with her teeth shut tightly together, having somehow or somewhere got the notion that in this way she showed a superior manner. “So stupid of him, I’m su-ah,” she said, trying it again with more success.

“Very stupid of him, I’m sure,” agreed Miriam simply. “You will excuse me, Mrs. Thompson. I must go. My dinner will be late and it would be more than stupid of me to allow it to be spoiled.”

The sarcasm involved in Miriam’s remark entirely escaped Mrs. Thompson, for she went on talking about people being stupid. “How stupid of me,” she said, “not to know you wanted to go home. I will take you myself. Get right in and we shall be there in no time.”

“Really, Mrs. Thompson, it’s very good of you, but——” Miriam’s hesitation was due to several reasons. First of all, she was tired and wanted to ride, but she feared they might find the Durable stalled somewhere on the road, which would call for embarrassing explanations; and then there was Harkaway with the

starting crank and Rae with his wet clothes and the wash-boiler. She didn't feel equal to the strain.

"And you, too, Mr. Biddleson," said Mrs. Thompson politely, "and Mr. Harkaway, you live in town, of course——"

"Mr. Harkaway dines with us," said Miriam with dignity.

"Why, of course, as I was going to say, there's room for us all," said Mrs. Thompson. She was not always thus accommodating, but she hadn't finished all she had to tell of her troubles with her servants. How, for example, McLean, the engineer and electrician who ran their private lighting plant, attended to the three wind mills, the launch and acted as general master mechanic, had got drunk and by a masterly feat of inebriated ingenuity turned the salt water into the kitchen faucets and pumped the moat dry instead of filling it up—so stupid of him, to be sure—and, besides, Mrs. Thompson was consumed with curiosity as to why Biddleson and Harkaway were wet and she simply had to know about the

mysterious and apparently useless articles they carried.

"Why, Mr. Biddleson, you are wringing wet. You will catch your death-of-cold. And Mr. Harkaway, too. Why didn't you tell me you had been out on the bay and been upset? Launching is so dangerous. You ought to take up motoring. It is much safer and lots of fun."

"It must be great!" said Biddleson and Harkaway together.

"Yes," said Mrs. Thompson. "But we shall have to hurry, or you'll both catch your death-of-cold. Henri, Mr. Harkaway will ride with you."

"Oui, Madame," said Henri, which was all the French that Mrs. Thompson understood.

Biddleson passed the wash-boiler to Harkaway, who carefully moored it to the running board on his side and then climbed into the seat with Henri, still holding the starting handle of the Durable in a conspicuous manner.

"W'at ees zat?" asked Henri respectfully, indicating the drip-pan and struggling between

an immense curiosity and the sense of his mental position.

"That," replied Harkaway coldly, "is Mr. Biddle'son's, and he is taking it home."

"Oui, M'sieu, I know, but w'at for he take it home? To use? N'est-ce pas? But w'at for?"

"I will tell you," said Harkaway in a cryptic manner, putting his explanation into the form of a charade, a logogriph, or whatever one calls such things. "My first is a handle;" he began whirling the starting crank before Henri's eyes, thereby almost hypnotising him. "My second is a receptacle," pointing to the drip-pan, "and my whole is a vehicle. Tell me what it is, quick!" he demanded of the astonished Frenchman.

"Did you speak to me, Mr. Harkaway?" asked Mrs. Thompson, pointedly, wishing him to understand that she didn't approve of his conversing with her chauffeur.

"No," answered Harkaway. "I was asking Henri about his mother in Paris. I used to know her well."

"How interesting!" murmured Mrs. Thompson and subsided.

"M'sieu, M'sieu!" said Henri excitedly, but in a low voice. "I know! I know! But you have him w'at you call meexed up. Your first is your oil-can; your second ees your start heem; and zen, M'sieu, comes w'at you call heem?—your cipher—your zero—your hole for zee starter. Parbleu! You lose heem. N'est-ce pas? I see zee new carr w'ich you lose, and zee yong lady in it. Ha ha!"

"Right you are, Henri," said Harkaway. "But don't tell anybody you guessed it. Did she—was she doing all right?" he inquired anxiously.

"Gr-r-rand! Magnifique! She go up zee hill by madame's like—like zees: Pouf!"

Henri in order to do justice to his admiration of Dorothy's driving, let go the steering wheel with both hands.

"Henri!" screamed Mrs. Thompson in terror as the car swerved sharply.

"Oui, madame," said Henri humbly, recovering control. "Pardon. I got my—my det of cold. I sneeze!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson in relief as she sank back on the cushions, pale but still aware that she was Mrs. Thompson. "So—so stupid of him, I'm sure."

"Henri," Harkaway murmured admiringly, "I used to know your grandfather. Fine old gentleman; brilliant, clever and witty and a good liar. Remember, Henri! a good liar!"

"Merci, M'sieu!"

"Aren't you afraid, Mr. Biddleston," Mrs. Thompson said, "that Mr. Harkaway will let that funny thing fall, it will get bent? What an extraordinary looking object! What is it, may I ask, Mr. Biddleston?"

"That," said Biddleston inanely, having overheard part of what Harkaway said to the chauffeur, "is Mr. Harkaway's, and he's taking it home."

"I can see that he is taking it home," returned Mrs. Thompson icily, her position as the wife of Biddleston's employer asserting itself for the moment. "But I didn't hear you say what it was."

"Mrs. Thompson," said Miriam calmly, coming to the rescue, "that is a part of our

automobile. It went into the water just after we crossed on the ferry, and Rae got wet recovering it."

"Automobile!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson. "I didn't know you had one. Where—where is it? What have you done with it?"

"It has gone on ahead," answered Miriam in an even manner, just as though the simple fact that they had lost part of their automobile in the bay, and that the rest of it had gone off all by itself was a matter of everyday occurrence and was of no interest to anyone but themselves.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Thompson, subdued. "How interesting! I am glad you have one, I'm sure!"

"M'sieu! Msieu! w'at ees eet? Look!"

They all looked. They were just rounding a curve and a short distance ahead they saw, with varying emotions, the faithful Biggs driving an express wagon. In the body of the wagon behind him were the four extra wheels, the detached rumble seat and the red, brass-bound trunk.

“S-h-h!” said Harkaway to Henri. “Don’t say a word. Those wheels belong to Mr. Biddleson. He lost ’em out of his head and Biggs is taking them home.”

Just at this moment Biggs pulled up and stopped in the middle of the road to light his pipe. Henri, not being able to get by, was obliged to come to an abrupt stop.

“Hi! Biggs!” shouted Biddleson in a rage because he knew that even Miriam couldn’t satisfactorily explain such an astonishing sight. “Get out of the way, you fool. We—we’re in a hurry!”

Harkaway was enjoying the situation. He appreciated particularly the immense calm and repose of Biggs, who went on lighting his pipe to the extent of six matches before he got one to take hold. Then clucking gently to the horse, he drove to a wider place where he pulled aside and waited, cap in hand, for the more stylish and imposing vehicle to pass. It must not be thought that Biggs was at all embarrassed by his somewhat undignified and unaristocratic appearance as driver of an ex-

press wagon. Neither must it be imagined that he apologised later, or explained anything about it. As a matter of fact, when Biggs arrived in the launch at the city dock with the wheels, the rumble seat and the auto trunk, the driver of the only express wagon in sight was about to go home to dinner and go home he did, but not until he had chartered his whole outfit to Biggs, who said he would drive it himself.

Whatever Biggs did, as long as it did not violate the laws of the land or involve some question of moral turpitude, he did openly and calmly, without apologies, excuses or attempted justification. To sum up, what Biggs did was all right simply because Biggs did it, and he never thought it necessary to discuss it. This particularly British trait in Biggs was one that aroused Harkaway's deepest admiration and envy. He didn't look upon it as a trait, however. He considered it an achievement, an attitude of mind—a lofty one, to be sure—that could only come with long practice.

And, besides all this, the extra wheels, the rumble seat and the red, brassbound auto trunk were no concern of Harkaway's. It may be remembered that the purchase of these rather unusual extra parts was the result of a brilliant idea on the part of Biddleson. He had craftily conceived that by a judicious and daily interchange of wheels, and by substituting the rumble seat or the auto trunk for the tonneau, the people of Tidewater in general, and Mrs. Thompson in particular, would come to believe that the Biddlesons had two, or perhaps three cars instead of one. The possibility of putting it over Mrs. Thompson had won Miriam over to her husband's scheme, though Harkaway had pooh-poohed it from the first. He said that for his part, he wouldn't give a red cent to make Mrs. Thompson think he had a thousand machines. "Not for mine," he had declared finally to Biddleson. "If you want to spend your money for these fool things, you can. I'm going to save mine for gasoline."

For this reason, Harkaway could not re-

strain an emotion of pleasure, a sort of "I-told-you-so" feeling at the way the scheme had turned out. As he swung round to grin a meaning and comprehensive grin of triumph at Bid, he caught sight of Miriam first. She was cowering under the expected blow from Mrs. Thompson who, she knew, would neglect no opportunity of humiliating her. Miriam didn't realise that her enemy couldn't know what all these contraptions in the wagon were. Her face was drawn with misery and expressed the foreboding sense of the crowning humiliation of her whole life.

Harkaway did not grin. He turned around again and stared sternly ahead. "Biddleston was a chump," he thought, "and it serves him right, but with Miriam it's different." He wouldn't stand any nonsense from Mrs. Thompson. What difference did Mrs. Thompson's opinion make to him? He didn't care a picayune for the whole Thompson tribe from Thompson (Tompkins) the gardener who let the cows in over the drawbridge down to the Mrs. Thompson whose five thousand

dollar French car he was riding in at that moment. But Miriam had always been a friend of his, and that was all there was to it. If Mrs. Thompson opened her head to say a word, he'd——

“How deliciously funny!” laughed Mrs. Thompson maliciously. “What a charming and original way of getting one’s car home! I suppose, Miriam dear, that besides what Mr. Biggs has in the wagon and what you didn’t drop in the bay, the rest of it is up in a balloon somewhere. Do tell me—you will, won’t you, dear—when you get it all together? I would so like to see it all at once!”

Harkaway turned around in his seat and glared coldly, vindictively at the wife of Tidewater’s mightiest plutocrat. Then he lied—deliberately, and circumstantially. “You will pardon me, Mrs. Thompson,” he said icily, “but those things that seem to amuse you so much are mine. They came on ahead with Biddle’son’s auto. The chassis of my racing car wasn’t quite completed. It will arrive later. You may have an opportunity of ob-

serving it all together when I drive it by Devonshire Hall."

Nothing more was said. In fact there was nothing more to say nor time to say it. The car pulled up at the Biddleson house; outside stood the Durable, seemingly intact, shiny and new. Henri jumped out and with a profound bow opened the tonneau door for Mrs. Biddle-son to descend. "Thank you," she said to Henri, and, to Mrs. Thompson, "So good of you—a charming drive."

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Thompson vaguely. "The pleasure is mine, I'm sure."

Mrs. Thompson drove away toward her mediæval mansion with her teeth tightly clenched, this time naturally and unaffectedly—ferociously, even, wondering whether that upstart Harkaway had an overdue note at the bank, or if the rather extensive Harkaway Addition were heavily mortgaged, so that he could be properly disciplined by her husband and made to know his place.

Miriam and her husband and Harkaway left the Durable silent and innocuous outside the

gate and went into the house to find Dorothy bright and cheerful with the dinner piping hot and coffee steaming in an alluring manner on the back of the stove.

"Now," she announced briskly, "if Mr. Harkaway will put down that crank, and wash his hands, we will eat."

Of course they discussed the whole matter over the dinner-table and Dorothy heard a great deal about Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Thompson's baronial mansion with its battle-mented walls of red cedar shingles and the gas-pipe screen for the ivy to climb up. Also, she heard a great deal about Biggs, who in the meantime had come up quietly and unloaded the wheels and the other things and departed to whence he came because he had agreed to get back at eight with the wagon, don't you know.

"It must have been perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Dorothy, "to have seen Mr. Biggs sitting up on that wagon like a duke, looking down upon and ignoring the supercilious and hateful Mrs. Thompson. Tell you what, Mir-

iam, we'll invite him to the picnic. That's what we'll do."

"What picnic?" asked Biddleson dully.

"Why, didn't we tell you, Rae? Miriam and I planned it all while we were walking to Sahara to meet you. We're going to leave here at eight to-morrow morning and go just where and just as far as we please, and if we run out of gasoline, or lose something, there will be Mr. Biggs. He always has just what one wants."

"Mr. Biggs isn't going on this picnic, Dorothy," said Miriam decisively.

"Why not?" exclaimed her sister. "Don't you like him?"

"Ye-e-s," admitted Miriam reluctantly. "But he is altogether too public in everything he does to suit me. He would want to stop and have tea on the courthouse steps, just as like as not."

"Why shouldn't we, if we wanted to?" Dorothy asked. "It wouldn't be sinful, would it?"

"No, dear, but people don't do such things,

as—as driving an express wagon, for instance.” An expression of shame and resentment came over Miriam’s face when she said this, although she knew that Biggs had done it as a favour to her and her husband.

“What people don’t do such things?” Dorothy demanded.

“Why, the best people, of course.”

“I suppose, then,” said Dorothy thoughtfully, “you mean that the best people are those who are different from Mr. Biggs?”

“No,” said Miriam impatiently, “the best people are—are—the best people. Don’t you see, stupid?”

“Yes, I see,” replied Dorothy, purposely misunderstanding. “The best people, as you call them, are certainly stupid. That is what Schopenhauer says, anyway.”

“I don’t care what Schopenhauer says, whoever he is,” returned Miriam with spirit. “Harvey Biggs is not going on this picnic.”

“Well,” said Dorothy, “I must say I like the looks of Mr. Biggs. He isn’t afraid to

do what he pleases, and, what's more, he doesn't look at all stupid to me."

An hour after dinner they were all outside inspecting the Durable when Biggs came back, this time on a wheel. He was presented in due form to Dorothy by Harkaway. Dorothy was cordiality itself, but Miriam was cold and frosty. In two or three days, Harkaway knew she would be ashamed of herself and treat Biggs like a long-lost brother; but to-night she was determined to let him know that she was bitterly offended. All this was lost on Biggs. Neither did it occur to him to be insulted because Miriam talked openly about the picnic, where they were going, what they were going to eat, when they were going to start, and yet didn't include him as one of the party. In the first place he wasn't conscious of having done anything wrong, and, if he thought about it at all, he knew that an automobile for four wouldn't hold five, to say nothing of the lunch-basket and the fireless cooker which they intended to take along to keep the ice-cream cool in.

It was almost midnight when Dorothy retired to her room and was ready to go to sleep. Then Miriam entered, sat on the edge of the bed and took possession of one of her sister's hands.

"Dolly, dear," she began in a maternal manner, "of course, you know I am much older than you are."

"Oh, no, not so much older," said Dorothy drowsily. "You've only been married longer!" Which was quite true, as Dorothy hadn't been married at all.

"That's just what I wanted to talk about," said Miriam, glad of the opening. "You are through with your school, now, and it's high time you were married."

"Whom to?" asked Dorothy, grammatically but sleepily. "Mr. Biggs?"

"No, you silly child, not Mr. Biggs, at all! I do wish you would stop talking about him. He is nice enough in his way, but he isn't at all suitable for a husband. To begin with he has no social position which a girl of your attainments would like to fill. You have only

just met him, and you know nothing about him."

"It's lucky," said Dorothy, yawning, "that he met us this afternoon with the gasoline, or we shouldn't have been in our present position. We'd have been stranded high and dry on that Sahara road."

She turned over, and in another moment would have been fast asleep. Miriam grasped her shoulder and shook it violently.

"Dorothy, listen! I want you to understand, dear!" she began. "Open your eyes. You hear me?" Dorothy opened one eye—the one nearest Mrs. Biddleston, who went on: "Now there is Mr. Harkaway, a rising young man——"

"I am so glad of it," said Dorothy, opening the other eye with a great effort. "Rising young man, you say? Glad of it—he won't be late for the picnic. I wish I were a rising young woman, but I'm so—sleepy." Her voice trailed off. Her eyes closed, and she would have been gone in a second, but that her sister relentlessly shook her again.

"Dorothy!" she said sharply. "You do make me so cross! You are NOT going to sleep. You are going to listen to me. When I am done you can sleep, but I advise you to lie awake and think over what I am going to tell you. Rae and I have spent a lot of money on your education, and we are going to see that you make something of yourself. As I was saying, Mr. Harkaway is a rising young man. He owns all of Harkaway's Addition, and I could see this afternoon that he was very much interested in you. You mustn't neglect your opportunities, my dear!" Miriam was gradually relenting. "I have invited him to breakfast (this meaningly) and you must be nice to him and stop thinking about that absurd Mr. Biggs. He has nothing but his position with the steamship company. English people are all right, but you must remember that you are an American and must live in America."

"Yes, dear," agreed Dorothy, making a last futile effort at comprehension. "Stop thinking about that absurd Mr. Harkaway—

all right but an Englishman—owns all of Biggs's Addition—Biggs—Biggs——” She was gone.

Miriam looked at her a moment with great tenderness, carefully smoothed down her pillow and tucked her in as she had done when Dorothy was a child, kissed her softly and silently left the room.

CHAPTER VIII

A RIDE IN MRS. THOMPSON'S CAR

WHEN Dorothy got up and went to her window the next morning the ocean lay before her eyes like a great lake of shining light. She could see plainly the channel by which the bay's waters passed seaward. Across this the hills wore a peaceful and remote aspect, arousing a sense of pleasure in travelling to them. This pleasure was damped by a feeling that she ought to go to church. To quiet her conscience she went and called down to Miriam to know whether there was an early service.

"I might go and be back in time to join the rest," she said to herself. "Of course I would miss my breakfast, but that would be an added virtue."

Mrs. Biddleston called back that there was no church at all that Sunday, so Dorothy in-

stantly dismissed breakfast piety from her mind and commenced dressing herself with great care and judgment, proceeding in this important ceremony with two definite objects in mind. First, she wished to punish Miriam for being rude to Mr. Biggs; then she determined to let her sister know that she did not intend to marry Mr. Biggs—or was it Mr. Harkaway? she was too sleepy to remember which it was that had been banned the night before—unless she wanted to. Having succeeded, as she knew, in this, she proceeded to mingle with this sartorial rebuke a bit of encouragement for Harkaway—or Biggs. Mostly for Harkaway, for he had been very decent and cordial to Biggs, and as Mr. Biggs had been oblivious to the snub administered by Miriam, this relieved Harkaway from any share in Miriam's fault. Consequently she added to a very plain, serviceable gown a small hat which she had tested and found not wanting in effect on men of taste. The gown was for her sister; the hat for Harkaway. For Miriam's benefit she added heavy boots with atrocious

leather lacings. For Harkaway she took off all her rings, aware that nothing so arouses a young man's interest as fingers unadorned.

That she had judged well she perceived the minute she walked into the airy dining room. Miriam took one look at the plain gown, the boots, the flapping laces and assumed a Sabbath resignation. Harkaway fell captive to all the rest of it and displayed his admiration by trying to force red-hot eggs upon her without the aid of dish or spoon. Having achieved the feat of making her drop one in her coffee and two on the table-cloth he desisted from his efforts to please, and maintained a solemn and profound expression of melancholy.

Over a fresh cup of coffee Dorothy smiled and said to him amiably, "I never could learn your English way of eating eggs, Mr. Harkaway. You eat them out of your hand, don't you? Do you wear gloves when you do it? Or do polite Englishmen hold the egg while a lady chips it? You know I'm awfully interested in English——"

"Why, Dorothy, Mr. Harkaway isn't Eng-

lish at all!" exclaimed Mrs. Biddleston indignantly.

"Biggs is the Britisher," put in her husband.

"Well," Dorothy retorted, "then *I'm* interested in Mr. Biggs."

"I protest you are crazy!" Miriam remonstrated. "What could anyone see in Mr. Biggs!"

Dorothy laid down her egg spoon and gazed reproachfully at her sister. "I seem to be making a mess of things on every hand, my dear! Will you please tell me whom I *am* interested in? I thought it was Mr. Biggs. You say it isn't Mr. Biggs at all. Mr. Harkaway, I'm a stranger in a strange land. You told me yesterday that you thought it horrid to have me picked out as a bride for you. Will you help me and tell me what man in this benighted parish I am free to be interested in? What young gentleman is entitled to my maidenly consideration and admiration?"

During this contribution to the breakfast conversation Mrs. Biddleston sat in horrified silence, throwing an occasional glance at her husband who took refuge in his victuals, emerg-

ing from this asylum at the end of Dorothy's outburst to say weakly, "Come, now, Dollie, don't talk nonsense. Your sister——"

Dorothy refused to be drawn off. She fixed Harkaway with a charming smile and said reproachfully, "Do you refuse to be my counsellor, guide and friend?"

Harkaway, making a magnificent effort, responded in a loud voice, hoping to convey the impression that he was perfectly at ease, "My dear Miss Dorothy, I can't be your counsellor, but as to a guide, I'll try; as a friend, command me."

"Friend?" objected Dorothy apprehensively. "But, would you be safe in that role? You know that even mild Platonic emotions are often thought to be but the precursor of something else. Now, if Miriam should be silly enough to imagine that — that —, or should try to help things along, you'd——"

"Dorothy!" said Miriam sharply.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Harkaway is one of our oldest friends. Control yourself, my dear."

Dorothy turned a serene look on the petri-

fied Harkaway and said quietly, "Don't worry, Mr. Harkaway. I can see you are the man at whose head I'm to be thrown—tossed like a peanut to an elephant——"

Here Mrs. Biddleston rose in her wrath. "Certainly you are beyond all reasoning with, Dollie!" she said haughtily. "The idea of calling Mr. Harkaway an elephant!"

"So long as I call myself a peanut I don't see where he's injured," was the calm response. "And your rebuke simply confirms my suspicion. Mr. Harkaway *is* the elephant. And he told me so yesterday, before he knew who I was. Cheer up, Mr. Harkaway, I refuse to be thrown at your head. You needn't dodge. You're absolutely safe. Now if you'll release that plate of toast I'll finish my breakfast."

Miriam stalked majestically away, taking with her, apparently, all that was left of her husband's human attributes, for when she had finally closed the door he continued to gaze from Dorothy to Harkaway and from Harkaway to Dorothy in an abstruse and stony manner as though he had been wound up to swing

his head from side to side and somebody had forgotten to stop him. Finally he did run down, or Harkaway kicked him under the table, for he went out and left them together. Harkaway ate intermittently, now and again glancing at Dorothy when he thought she wasn't looking till she caught his eyes and said sweetly, "Getting over your scare?"

"I'm getting more afraid every minute," he said honestly. To his great satisfaction she blushed.

Mrs. Biddleston now came in, dressed in an auto coat, with a huge veil and dark glasses. "Rae is out there getting the machine ready," she announced. "I think we'd better be starting. Dorothy, you surely aren't going to wear those awful boots?" she went on when Harkaway vanished.

Her younger sister gazed at the offending boots and nodded. "We may have to walk, Miriam, and I'm going prepared for anything."

"Walk! Why, Rae is taking plenty of gasoline along! What makes you say such ridic-

ulous things?" They passed out and into the yard where the Durable stood clucking away while Biddleston pulled on his gloves. "I'll drive her going out," he was saying with an air of importance. "Then you can try her back, Hark."

"That means that I sit beside the chauffeur," Dorothy remarked pleasantly. "So that saves Mr. Harkaway for the present."

Miriam's efforts to alter this arrangement availed nothing and Harkaway dutifully helped her into the tonneau and got in himself. Biddleston grasping the churn handle, looked anxiously round and started the Durable off.

When they reached the ferry Dorothy wished to know where they were going. "You ought to tell the ferryman," she said. "Then if we don't come back before dark people will know where to look for us." This suggestion was hailed with scorn and while they crossed and went on their way towards Sahara and the upper bay Biddleston explained at length that this was an endurance run. "We'll run there and back on two gallons of gasoline," he pro-

claimed. "The catalogue says the Durable can make twenty-five miles on one gallon. It's twenty miles to Hark's place and that will use up less than a gallon. We'll possibly use a quart while the engine is running free, and we shall have more than a gallon left to run home on."

"Is that all the gasoline you've got along?" Dorothy demanded.

"Yes," said Biddleson. "Did you ever hear of an endurance run where they took along more than they needed?"

Dorothy didn't reply, but contented herself with admiring the scenery till Mrs. Biddleson leaned over and said, "We're getting near to Mr. Harkaway's property, Dollie. He owns all that region out there between the bay and the sea. It's only four or five miles from Tidewater by launch, you know, but by this road around the bay it's pretty nearly twenty. It's the prettiest spot near here."

"Yes, I'm quite proud of it," Harkaway remarked, leaning forward too.

"I should think you would be," was Doro-

thy's reply. "Anything to get out of that horrid town. I suppose you stay over on your place all the time, don't you?"

"Hark lives in town," Biddleston put in, slowing down for the next turn and succeeding in coming to a full stop.

Dorothy seemed shocked. "I don't see how you can do it!" she said energetically. "I would always stay out here! always!"

"Well, Hark is going to build on the place, some day, aren't you, Hark?" Biddleston pursued, while his wife relaxed in her seat and stared at an invisible landscape just behind her husband's ear.

Dorothy now turned clear round and gazed at Harkaway in an interested manner. He returned her stare a moment and then smiled, lost the smile in an expression of great solicitude about the next hill, which he gazed at very severely, and ended by remarking huskily, "I've sold it."

"Then it isn't yours any more?" Dorothy inquired. "Miriam, what did you say it was Mr. Harkaway's for? I thought we were go-

ing out to look at his property. And he says he's sold it."

"What difference does that make?" Biddle-son interjected.

Dorothy frowned at him. "It makes an awful difference, Rae. You don't seem to understand that you and Miriam are showing me the—the elephant. And if the—the elephant hasn't any property, what's the use of going all this distance?"

"I'm afraid we've punctured that right rear tire, Bid," Harkaway said hastily. "Stop her and I'll get down and look."

The Durable came to a standstill with great suddenness. Harkaway dismounted and vanished under the machine where he made a loud noise by knocking a small pocket wrench against the transmission case. When he emerged, much flushed, Dorothy was leaning over and looking at him. "Do you carry spare punctures, Mr. Harkaway?" she demanded, raising her veil to dazzle him with her smile.

"I knew there wasn't a puncture," Biddle-

son put in triumphantly. "Crank the engine, Hark. She's stopped."

The crank had disappeared and after a long search it was discovered to be hanging on the pet-cock of the radiator. "We might have lost it," said Mrs. Biddleson severely. "I can't see why you are so careless, Rae."

"Poor Rae!" sighed Dorothy. "I saw Mr. Harkaway hang it there himself."

"Why didn't you say so, then?" demanded her sister.

"I forgot," was the penitent answer. "And I thought Mr. Harkaway would remember."

As there seemed to be nothing to say the Durable drove on and finally made the ford across the upper shoals of the bay. Once over this Biddleson said he would show them how the "jigger" worked. He would "get a good, rich mixture and then open her out." He opened her out with such effect that two minutes later Mrs. Biddleson was screaming and poking vigorously at a cow which was trying to maintain a precarious foothold half

way up the steep bank by the roadside, and gave every indication of preparing for a frantic leap right down into the car.

"There!" shouted Harkaway. "What did I tell you, Bid? I knew you'd run into a well, get a cow, hit a hayrake, or something, fooling with that 'jigger.' There's your cow!"

"I see her," said Biddleston bitterly, as the animal glowered at them. In his excitement he stopped the engine, and intimated pointedly that it was Harkaway's duty to get out and crank her up again.

"But there isn't room for him to get out!" cried Mrs. Biddleston, making a feint for the cow's left eye which the animal parried with her right horn. "And if he does the cow will hook him!"

"It's Biddleston's cow, of course!" said Harkaway. "He found her and he ought to keep her from jumping into people's laps."

Not wishing to show the white feather in Dorothy's presence, especially after her treatment of him, he deliberately got out, waved the crank at the beast and then started the engine.

At the first cough the cow tossed her head and slid down behind the car. As Harkaway climbed back into the tonneau he heard Dorothy say calmly, "Rae, you ought to be more careful. You'll break the horns off some cow yet by your carelessness."

"Then she'll be the cow with the crumpled horn," retorted Biddleston. "Ha! *ha!* HA!" he guffawed, greatly pleased with his own joke.

When they finally emerged into the meadow that bordered Harkaway's property on the bay side and traversed the pretty road that led to the ocean beach, the party resumed its spirits. Dorothy turned round with shining dark eyes to say to Harkaway, "I think this is perfectly fine. Why did you sell it?"

"I haven't altogether sold it," he returned anxiously. "An old chap from Maine wants to buy it and I gave him a price which he thinks is all right. But we haven't signed the papers yet. So it's still mine."

The car slipped through a little sunny wood, mounted a sandy slope sprinkled with scrubby

firs and came out on a high, windy dune beyond which the sea glimmered. A fresh northwester was blowing and the surf ran in long, racing rollers up and down the shore. Far out a solitary sail rose above the horizon. Biddle-son stopped the car and got out. "This is as good a place as any," he remarked comfortably. "And we've made our twenty-miles."

"But I want to see Mr. Harkaway's property!" Dorothy exclaimed. "Why not drive on through it?"

Miriam was now out of the tonneau and refused to get back. "You and Mr. Harkaway can walk around and see it better," she said, with an excellent air of lassitude. "I declare, I'm tired of riding. The car jolts so."

"No such thing," said her husband eagerly. "It rides finely. Come on and get in, Miriam. Harkaway can run the auto."

Mrs. Biddle-son despatched to her husband a look of scorn and waved Harkaway and Dorothy on. "I want to rest. Mr. Harkaway, I'll depend on you to show Dollie the sights."

"There isn't much to see," he returned stiffly.

Instead of the glance of thanks he expected, he got a full look in the face from Dorothy. "Don't be scared," she said quietly. "I won't make you propose to me—to-day."

"Why—er—I never—I didn't——" he stammered.

"Of course not," Dorothy said promptly. "Anyway, you've as good as sold it, and I wouldn't have you anyway. Come on!"

Harkaway frowned, laughed and assumed a sudden expression of beatitude. They departed, chatting comfortably. When they were beyond earshot Mrs. Biddleson looked at her husband. "Rae! what's the matter with those two? I specially warned Dollie last night to be nice to Harkaway. He acts like a perfect fool. And as for Dolly, she is acting like——" Words failed Mrs. Biddleson and she was silent.

While she was watching her husband extract the luncheon basket and trying to formulate her sense of disgust into words the young peo-

ple were strolling on the crest of the dune with the sea on one hand and the sunny stretches of meadow and woods on the other. Harkaway was answering Dorothy's questions and responding to her small talk, but with conscious expectancy of at any moment hearing her engage him in the following dialogue:

"You must think I've behaved very oddly, Mr. Harkaway, but——"

"Not at all, Miss Doro——"

"Please let me finish. I don't want you to think that I'm the sort of girl that is willing to throw or be thrown——"

"Of course you'll just think it awful, Dorothy; but I want you to know I'm meek and humble and don't expect too much all at once. Could you like me a little—Dorothy!"

Harkaway was undoubtedly in love.

Instead of taking part in this delightful imaginary interchange of thought Dorothy said nothing of the sort. She gave no hint that she considered she had done anything impolite. She admired the scenery briefly, refused to say much and sat down on a little sand bluff.

When Harkaway had thrown himself down near her she graciously told him he might smoke.

As she gazed seaward with flushed, eager face, he watched her unobtrusively and saw expressions of pleasure, of surprise, of delight in the whole novel play of nature flit over her countenance like wind across water. Oddly enough, he found nothing worth while to say himself and they sat quietly together till a wild halloo told them Biddleston was announcing luncheon. Dorothy got quickly up and remarked contentedly, "I don't see why everybody doesn't live in some place like this. Why don't Rae and Miriam?"

"He's cashier of the bank," Harkaway explained, "and he has to live in town."

"Isn't it horrid?" Dorothy exclaimed. "I thought Tidewater would look pretty when I came back to it. But it doesn't. *This* is heavenly."

Mrs. Biddleston received them hospitably, presiding over several square yards of spotless table-cloth from her seat against the rear wheel

of the Durable. She waved a welcome to them with an olive fork and Biddleson, raising an inflamed countenance from a large fire and a steaming coffee pot, demanded of Harkaway why he did not clean out the spring. "It's a pretty thing to invite people to your place and then ask them to get water for coffee out of a mud puddle."

"Is the coffee going to be muddy?" Miriam demanded anxiously.

Biddleson again investigated the contents of the pot with streaming eyes and shook his head. "I don't know," he replied simply. "I strained the water through the gasoline strainer."

Dorothy, just about to sit down, stared suddenly at her brother-in-law, then dropped to the ground and reached for a boiled egg. Later she tested the coffee and turned to Harkaway to say, "I wish you would clean out that spring, Mr. Harkaway. Rae has spoiled the coffee. It has a sort of back-fire taste to it."

"I didn't even know there was a spring

here," Harkaway remarked. "There is a very good well, though."

"Well, why didn't you say so?" Biddle-son demanded wrathfully. "If you and Dorothy had stayed here and helped, then we would have had good coffee. That's just the way with people like you—gad off and then come back and kick about things."

"Never mind, old man, I'll run the auto back to town and you needn't do anything but sit in the tonneau and talk," Harkaway said comfortingly. "By the way, did you turn off the gasoline?"

"Do you hear the engine running?" Biddle-son demanded sarcastically.

"No, but I smell gasoline."

"It's the coffee," said Mrs. Biddle-son frigidly.

"Perhaps, but I see something dripping under the car," Dorothy remarked. "In fact, it's quite a little stream. If it's water, it smells funny."

Biddle-son got up with a groan and went over to the Durable. They heard him give a sud-

den exclamation. "It's gasoline all right," he cried. "How did it happen? Harkaway, did you touch this little stop cock under the carburetor?"

"I just asked you if you did," was the response. "You're running the car."

Biddleston came back, wiping his hands on his handkerchief. "We didn't lose much," he said easily. "I see just how it happened. We were going through that brush back there and a little branch must have caught it and opened the cock a little. Lucky we've got plenty of gasoline."

Miriam's luncheon was good, barring the coffee, and as the meal progressed Biddleston laid large plans. "We'll just do this every Sunday, eh, Hark? Nothing like it. Now that we've got our own machine we can go just where and when we like. Where'll we go next Sunday?"

"I'm going to church," Miriam announced virtuously, glancing at her husband.

"Oh, well, if you have to go to church, Hark and I'll go off on a stag picnic," Biddleston said,

brightening up at the prospect of a day with the Durable without the ladies bothering around.

"But you have to go with me," his wife explained. "Don't you know? you're the secretary of the Guild and the Bishop will be there. You've got to hand in your accounts."

"One dollar and fifty-seven cents," Biddle-son responded promptly.

"It isn't the amount," Miriam continued, loftily. "It's the moral effect of the thing. Of course, you must be there!"

"I'll appoint Dorothy my deputy," Biddle-son said weakly. "She can do the thing as well as I can."

"Oh, there's no occasion for Dorothy to go," Miriam said with supernatural indifference. "Dorothy can go wherever she likes."

"Then she might be willing to go with me," Harkaway put in anxiously. "We could go and see the sights up the coast."

"I'm afraid I promised Mr. Biggs to go with him some day in his launch," Dorothy said

slowly, eating an olive. "And I'm not sure he didn't say next Sunday."

Mrs. Biddleson was about to make a long remark when there came a faint sound from the bay and Biddleson said, "By George, that sounds like the *Spithead* now. It's Biggs, I'll bet a hat. Wonder what he's doing up here?"

"Nobody could ever tell what Mr. Biggs might do at any moment," said Miriam icily. "He might even be coming here. He seems to think he's invited to everything."

"Oh, is he coming here?" Dorothy inquired, with interest. "How nice! I like him."

CHAPTER IX

BIDDLESON MAKES THE COFFEE

At this moment Biggs's launch appeared off the point and rapidly slipped into the little bight above which the party was lunching. Biggs was alone and he had evidently been scanning the scene, for when Dorothy waved her handkerchief he replied by a flourish of his cap and ran the launch straight up to the beach.

When he appeared through the fern Miriam refused to get up and merely nodded to him. Dorothy smiled, moved over a little and insisted on his sitting beside her. "You're awfully late," she announced.

"I am sorry," said Biggs, not knowing what else to say.

"We weren't sure you were coming," said Miriam, placing a slight emphasis on the "you," hoping by this that he would under-

stand that they were sure he was not coming. "Or," she concluded, "we should have waited luncheon for you."

"I'm glad you didn't think of waiting for me," returned Biggs, which was quite a sensible remark to make considering the fact that he had no intention of coming and it was by the merest chance that he was there.

"Have some beef tea, old man?" Harkaway interposed facetiously, handing Biggs a cup of the muddy concoction that had been dignified by the name of coffee. "It's very good and I think you will like it. Bid made it himself—no one can make beef tea like Bid can; tastes a little like coffee, but you won't mind that after the first swallow."

"It does taste a bit like coffee," agreed Biggs doubtfully, sipping it.

"It *is* coffee," said Mrs. Biddleston coldly. "Will you have cream and sugar, Mr. Biggs?"

"Thank you, two lumps, if you please," said the unabashed Biggs. "I fancy," he continued, still unaware of Miriam's frigidity, "that I taste something besides coffee. It's a—

a——” He stirred the sugar up and took another sip.

“A kind of hydrocarbon effect?” suggested Harkaway.

“No-o,” he answered slowly. He closed his eyes and endeavoured through a train of associated ideas to arrive at the true nature and origin of the strangely familiar taste. “It’s more like—it’s something like—it’s cylinder oil!” he finally announced.

“There!” said Harkaway, turning to Biddleson and gazing at him in sad reproach. “Didn’t I tell you that if you wiped the gasoline strainer with that old greasy rag you’d get some dirt in the carburetor, or spoil the coffee, or set the ice-cream afire, or do something dangerous? You are altogether too messy, Ez, to be a good cook, and too thoughtless to be a good chauffeur. Hereafter, I shall run the auto myself and Mrs. Biddleson will serve the ice-cream. Have some ice-cream, Biggs. Bid hasn’t touched it, I assure you. It’s a fine antidote for cylinder oil.”

“Thank you,” said Biggs gratefully, put-

ting down the coffee. "I would have an ice, if you don't mind."

"This is ice-cream, not an ice," said Miriam, relaxing a little.

"Yes," Harkaway supplemented. "This is real ice-cream, not one of those damp, ghastly messes they serve to perspiring Americans in London."

"And when you've finished it," said Dorothy, "I will give you another if you promise to tell us just why you were late."

Biggs was nearly done with his second dish, pondering deeply all the while. But he could not think of an adequate reason for being late when he had not intended to come at all. "Perhaps they did invite me," he thought. "Didn't Dorothy wave her handkerchief as though she expected me and then reproach me for being late; and besides, Mrs. Biddleson said if she had been sure I would come, she would have waited. I am a clumsy ass," Biggs concluded, "and Mrs. Biddleson will never forgive me. Anyway, I know why I didn't get here sooner than I did."

"I had trouble with my timer," Biggs announced finally and truthfully enough.

"Did you forget to wind it?" asked Dorothy, looking at Biggs with great innocence.

"Huh!" snorted her brother-in-law with great sarcasm. "I suppose you think a timer's an alarm clock that he sets so he can tell when to start!"

"I had some trouble with the timer—the commutator, you know," Biggs began again, ignoring the interruption. "The spring broke."

"The mainspring, of course," Biddleston said in an aside to Harkaway, nudging him.

"That's too bad," Dorothy sympathised. "What does it do? Won't the engine go without it?"

"Ha HA!" exploded Biddleston as what he thought was a brilliant and an original idea struck him. "Ha HA! the engine goes when the boat goes. Ha HA!" He waited for a responsive laugh, but none was forthcoming. Instead, he felt his wife's disapproving eyes upon him.

"Rae, dear," she said patiently, "you are thinking of the old joke about a broken watch which goes when its owner goes. Mr. Biggs is speaking of a broken commutator spring."

"But wouldn't the engine go if the boat went?" objected Biddleston, only dimly realising that somehow or other his joke had been short-circuited. "Ha HA!"

"Yes, if he used oars, but he has no oars," said the practical Miriam.

"It could float out to sea with the tide, or he could push it with a pole," Biddleston protested. "Ha HA!"—this defiantly.

"That will do, dear," Miriam said firmly and quietly. "You can tell the rest of it to me to-night."

"Ha HA!" Biddleston guffawed once more; but this time it was only a reflex action. He had already subsided under his wife's compelling gaze.

"It's the spring that works the commutator," Biggs went on evenly, as though he hadn't been interrupted.

"Yes?" said Dorothy inquiringly.

"The commutator speeds the engine," Biggs went on. "It makes the connection with the electric current. It goes round and I set it with a little lever and the engine goes fast or slow according to the way I set the timer. It's quite simple, really. If you saw it you would understand."

"Do show it to me," Dorothy said with great interest. "I like to know about such things, Mr. Biggs."

"With the greatest of pleasure," responded Biggs politely.

As Dorothy and Biggs got up to go to the launch Mrs. Biddleston brushed the crumbs from her lap in the most conspicuous manner possible and announced in clear, commanding tones, "And now we will gather up the things and start for home." She reached here and there for cups, saucers and spoons to make a big noise with, hoping that Dorothy would realise that she ought to help, and that Biggs would forget his commutator.

Dorothy recognised her responsibility regarding the picnic things, but quickly shifted

the burden of it on Biddleston who sat in a daze still trying to solve the mystery of his frustrated joke. "Oh, Rae will help," Dorothy said lightly. "And when Mr. Harkaway gets the car ready he can blow the horn and I'll come back."

"Mr. Harkaway," said Miriam pointedly, after they were gone, "don't you think you should go too and see how it works, because if the commutator in the car should break you would know how to fix it?"

"Not me," replied Harkaway in great gloom. "The Durable hasn't got any commutator; and, besides, I don't butt in on any man—it's no picnic of mine. Let Biggs enjoy himself while he can. It's his launch and his commutator. Me for a cigarette and the tall grass."

"You are quite right," Miriam agreed sarcastically. "It apparently isn't any picnic of yours. And," her mind here reverted to the real picnic to which they had come in the auto and into which Biggs had intruded with his launch, "as far as I can see, it doesn't seem to

be anybody's picnic but Mr. Biggs's. I really believe that child had the audacity to ask him in spite of the fact that she knew we didn't want him."

"It does look as though she had invited him," admitted Harkaway. "At least he seemed to think someone did. I know I didn't. Anyway, so long as he's here we've got to treat him white."

"That's right," Biddleston heartily concurred. "Harvey's a friend of mine, and I don't care who invited him."

"Did *you* invite him, Rae?" demanded Mrs. Biddleston in a tone that made Harkaway sorry for Bid. But Biddleston was in no mood for anybody's sympathy. His face bore the look of the fabled worm that finally turned—at least that's the way he would have looked if a worm had a face. "I guess it would have been all right if I had," he asserted boldly.

"*Rae!*" Mrs. Biddleston imposed upon her husband a haughty, domineering look, but he refused to be subdued.

"Hi! Biggs!" he shouted as the climax to

his long-delayed but now determined declaration of conjugal independence. "Come back and have some more ice-cream!"

Biggs didn't hear him. "It's just an ordinary coil spring," he was saying to Dorothy. "It holds one point in contact with another. The spring broke and it took me half an hour to find another to put in."

"Is it all right now?" asked Dorothy, as Biggs helped her into the launch.

"Just as good as new," answered Biggs, holding her hand just a little longer than was necessary.

"It looks like a good boat," Dorothy said vaguely, extracting her hand from Biggs's too helpful grasp. "Is that the engine?" she inquired, pointing to the two cylinder machine that even a blind man would have recognised as the motive power of the vessel.

"Yes, that's it," replied Biggs with a trace of suspicion in his voice. It was nothing unusual with Biggs to have people pretend ignorance of a piece of machinery or something, so that later, they could display a brilliant and as-

tonishing ability to discover all that was known about it. Not that Biggs thought Dorothy would be guilty of such vanity, but, really, she had overdone the thing somewhat. Biggs stood in non-committal silence while Dorothy fluttered about, examining first this and then that.

"What a cute little wheel," she said finally, taking hold of a spoke of the brass-bound steering wheel which was installed by the side of the engine. "What would happen if I turned it?"

"Nothing," answered Biggs, now thoroughly convinced that she was trifling with his supposed credulity. "That is, nothing, except that you might stun a fish with the rudder as it swings around."

Dorothy, like a child, rapidly turned the wheel, and then quickly peered over to the side, ostensibly to ascertain what havoc she had done. "You mean thing!" she announced, after a fruitless gaze into the water. "I didn't get a thing! I believe you are teasing me, Mr. Biggs!"

“Haw-haw!” laughed Biggs, quite pleased with himself.

“And what is this?” she proceeded, indicating the lever that shifted the propeller blades. “Does that handle make the boat go too?”

“Yes—it makes it go backwards.”

“There! it didn’t do a thing!” she exclaimed with a pout as she pulled the lever clear back and the boat remained motionless. “I’m sure, now, Mr. Biggs, that you’re joking. I didn’t know Englishmen joked. I thought they just stood around and said ‘Bah Jove!’”

“Now, really, Miss Dorothy,” objected Biggs, quite taken aback. “They don’t—they do, of course—I mean they say, ‘By Jove!’ but they do something else as well, don’t you know!” He wiped his forehead in great perplexity. He was in an unusual state of confusion, quite astonishing to him. It may have been Dorothy’s bright eyes which were looking mischievously into his. At any rate he was unable to recall any specific instance of what his countrymen did do under

the not clearly defined circumstances. "By Jove!" he finally exploded.

Dorothy laughed merrily. "You English people are just deliciously funny," she declared. "I——"

"Really," said Biggs, scenting a compliment. "There's Barrie, you know; he——"

"But Barrie's a Scotchman," interposed Dorothy. "What I meant was you are so funny when you are serious."

"Indeed?" said Biggs stiffly, recovering his dignity. "I'm glad it pleases you to see us serious, for we do try to be sensible part of the time. You Americans try to be humorous all the time, which gets to be a beastly bore, don't you know!"

Dorothy looked at him, a hasty retort on her lips. But something in Biggs's manner deterred her. It, perhaps, was a demeanour compelling respect, even though Dorothy didn't recognise that quality in it. Biding her time, she presently said in a humble tone, "Thank you!"

"Beg pardon!"

"Thank you for the rebuke," said Dorothy. "Being humorous all the time is really too much of a strain, so we become silly. I wonder we've never thought to stop!"

"It's never too late to begin," Biggs suggested amicably.

"To begin what?"

"To begin to stop—I mean stop beginning to—oh!" Biggs gathered himself together with an effort, seeing a twinkle of amusement in Dorothy's eyes. "I mean that there is no reason why one should not be serious when one feels like it and that we should begin right now."

"All right," agreed Dorothy. "And perhaps you will first be good enough to tell me how to start this engine."

"You throw the switch over, and if there is a charge in one of the cylinders away she'll go. Try it."

Dorothy tried it without result. Although she seemed much disappointed, she was well aware what was the matter. The switch-plug, a small, brass, nail-like affair, was missing from

its hole, and there being no electric connection even when she threw the switch, she would have been more than surprised if the engine had started. However, she managed to look much put out.

"I don't think that was very funny," she said severely, as Biggs guffawed loudly and exhibited with great glee the brass plug which he had been carrying in his pocket. "You promised to be serious, you know, and now you are as wildly silly as—as any American. If you do that again I'll get right out of the boat!"

At this threat Biggs suddenly subsided, and looked much more foolish than he felt. He even failed to notice that Dorothy could not have got out of the boat if she had wished to, for the rising tide had floated the *Spithead* into three feet of water and her nose was a dozen feet from the bank.

"Now tell me," said Dorothy imperiously, taking note of Biggs's abject expression, "why the engine didn't start and why you are so pleased with that ridiculous brass thing you have in your hand."

"This," said Biggs, meekly enough, "is a safety plug. When I take it out it breaks the battery circuit and of course the engine won't go."

"The engine won't go, just on account of that little thing?" queried Dorothy, with supernatural innocence.

"No! Couldn't possibly."

"Not if I turned the switch the other way?"

"Try it," Biggs invited her again.

Dorothy turned the switch—off, this time—and did it in such a manner that she made Biggs believe she expected something startling to happen; then, unnoticed by Biggs, she deftly inserted a steel hairpin into the hole left vacant by the brass plug which Biggs confidently twirled in his fingers. Covering the switch with one hand so that he couldn't see the hairpin, she looked up at him reproachfully.

"It didn't go after all," she admitted. "I thought you were teasing me again. What did you say that brass plug did?"

"It's part of the electric circuit. You see," explained Biggs carefully, as though conduct-

ing a class in motor boating, "when the piston recedes it sucks in a charge of gasoline vapour through the carburetor mixed with air; when it comes up again it compresses the mixture—the mixture of gas and air, you know. At this point the electric spark from the battery and coil ignites the charge, and the resulting explosion is the force that drives the engine. You see, if there is any break in the electrical connection—this is where the plug comes in"—perhaps Biggs meant to say that this was where the plug came out—"there can be no spark, no explosion and the engine can't go. Not while I have this plug," Biggs added, concealing with difficulty his immense pleasure because he had the plug and the best of Dorothy.

"I don't exactly understand," said Dorothy demurely, her hand still covering the switch, "what the plug has to do with it. Are you sure the engine won't go without the plug?"

Biggs smiled a superior smile, in lieu of an open answer, indicating plainly that he had never heard of such a thing and that the pos-

sibility of a gasoline engine going with a break in the electrical connections was not worth discussing.

“What would you say if it did?” pursued Dorothy, her hand on the switch.

“Why, I’d—I’d say——” he began. But what it was he intended to say, he didn’t say just then, for at that instant Dorothy threw over the switch and the engine started up with a loud roar. The *Spithead* jumped full speed astern and Biggs, losing his balance, fell backwards over the bulkhead and measured his full length on the carpet in the forward part of the launch. Even then he wasn’t prepared to finish his interrupted remark. In a dazed manner he got himself into a sitting posture, made a futile grab at something in the air above his head, presumably some stars he could see floating about, rubbed the back of his head, and then passed his hand two or three times across his forehead. This well-known operation for clearing one’s mind, or one’s vision, enabled Biggs to see Dorothy seated calmly by the engine, looking at him

with great interest as if waiting to hear what he had to say.

“By Jove!” said Biggs.

Dorothy laughed in great glee. “I knew that was what you would say. That is what an Englishman always says. And now that you have said it, I’ll run the boat while you are thinking up something else to say.” The *Spithead* meanwhile was at a standstill, bow towards the open bay. While Biggs was recovering his senses Dorothy had throttled the engine down, put the reverse lever in the centre and left the propeller to revolve slowly and ineffectually in the water. Now, without further consideration for Biggs, or asking information how to do it, she opened the throttle wide, threw the lever back and the *Spithead* began backing towards the woods at an alarming rate so that Biggs, still dazed, felt sure his boat was going to climb a tree at the water’s edge. “Look out!” he shouted in alarm.

“Isn’t it strange,” observed Dorothy without emotion as she moved the lever forward at

just the right time and the screw churned the water furiously and then slowly drove the craft forward on a graceful curve out of the little cove and out upon the bay, "isn't it a most curious coincidence that Mr. Fairbanks had a boat exactly like this one—the *Spoonholder*, he called it—and a Durable automobile so much like Rae's that I thought when I first saw it they must have bought it from him second hand?"

"Mr. Fairbanks?" questioned Biggs, achieving instinctively and at once a solid dislike for Fairbanks, whoever he was.

"Oh, Fred—Mr. Fairbanks—was at the university, in the engineering department, head instructor in 'Applied Mechanics.' I didn't take that course, but Fred—Mr. Fairbanks—used to take me—I mean we used to go out Saturday afternoons for an auto ride on the lake in the *Spoonholder*."

"Took the car with you in the boat, I suppose," said Biggs in a weak attempt at sarcasm.

"No," answered Dorothy. "Fred—Mr.

Fairbanks—put the Durable in the boathouse. It was some trouble to get it in, of course, but it would have looked too absurd to leave an automobile standing by the side of the lake just as though the horses were taking a swim, so we used to untie the boathouse, turn it round, to get the big, swinging doors on the right end, and then Fred would run the car down into it on some planks. When it was inside we'd lock it up, turn it round again and no one would ever take it for a garage."

"No, I don't believe anybody would," said Biggs gravely.

"And then," continued Dorothy, "we'd have the loveliest ride on the lake, particularly when the moon was shining and—and——"

"When the moon was shining," repeated Biggs with an inward pain.

"Yes, and Mr. Fairbanks talked so beautifully—so differently from the way he did in his classes—and—about—all kinds of engines, one cylinder and two cylinder. Two, he said, were always better than one. And he told me about sparks——"

"Why, to be sure," interrupted Biggs bitterly, as a hateful vision presented itself to his eyes of Dorothy on a Minnesota lake in soft moonlight with an odious professor sitting close to her telling her in tender tones of the moving and emotional parts of a gasoline engine. "I'm sure he told you all about sparks."

"Of course," said Dorothy, "and I know all about high compression and low compression——"

"No doubt of it," said Biggs, grinding his teeth.

"And knots, half-hitch, bowline, reef-knot——"

"And lovers' knots," suggested Biggs in despair.

"Yes, and rings," said Dorothy mischievously. "Piston rings, of course; and when we went home in the Durable he let me drive so that his hand would be free to—to——" At this point Biggs looked as if he wanted to get out of the boat, so Dorothy repented. "Free to roll cigarettes and smoke," she said.

"I'm sure, Mr. Biggs, you want to smoke. Do light your pipe! I don't mind it in the least. And you must promise not to tell the others! I mean, don't say anything to Rae and Mr. Harkaway about the Durable. It will make them so cross."

The *Spithead* under her sensible, seaman-like management, was pointed straight across the bay and rapidly making for Tidewater. Biggs sat smoking, gazing at Dorothy thoughtfully. She was something outside his experience. As the result of the too careful tutelage of Fairbanks she seemed capable of anything, even of converting the *Spithead* into a submarine at a moment's notice, or into an airship, perhaps. As Biggs smoked, and smoked, things assumed a truer perspective; he forgot for the time his ignominious descent into the shallow hold of his craft; even Fairbanks became less of an officious meddler in the affairs of mechanics and women. Under the influence of his pipe and with the return of calm, all his British assurance and dignity came back to him.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to know where we're going," he said inquiringly.

"I don't know where you are going, but I'm going home," answered Dorothy, ignoring the fact that she had, in a most high-handed manner, taken possession of Biggs's boat, and that Biggs was in it himself and perforce must go where she did.

"But," objected Biggs, forgetting whose boat it was also, "you won't go away and leave the others! They will wait all hours for you. They wouldn't leave without you."

"They wouldn't leave anyway, very far, whether I was there or not," she replied.

"Why?" asked Biggs in surprise.

"They can't. They're out of gasoline. I looked in the tank. They only brought two gallons along and they haven't got a quart left. So what's the use?"

Dorothy really intended to circle around for awhile and then return to the party, replenish the Durable's tank with some from Biggs's supply and finally dismiss that gentleman with a dazzling smile, or an intimidating frown,

whichever under the circumstances she thought would do him the most good. However, Biggs was no mind reader. He objected again:

"But you can't leave them like that, you know!"

"No?" said Dorothy with a rising inflection, as much as to say that the *Spithead* was leaving as it was, and that there was nothing to prevent her going on forever.

"But you can't leave them like that, you know!" repeated Biggs more firmly, but still politely.

"Did you speak to me?" demanded Dorothy coldly and as indifferently as she could, considering her rising anger. No man had ever before even suggested to her that she would or would not do a certain thing. Biggs, she thought, ought to be put in his proper place. She would do it.

"Yes," said Biggs in a very icy manner, "and you will pardon me, I am sure, if I insist that we go back at once." Biggs rose, took a step forward and looked at Dorothy as

though expecting her to relinquish her seat by the engine and allow him to run the launch. This manœuvre Dorothy did not choose to notice. Instead she looked straight ahead—right through Biggs—at the buildings and docks of Tidewater, which they were rapidly approaching.

Biggs regarded her silently with strong disapproval. He could not, or at least did not, care to use physical force, which her attitude seemed to demand. She had a defiant grasp of the steering wheel, a firm hold on the reverse lever and a touch-me-if-you-dare look on her face. This, of course, was childish in Dorothy, but she was not very old. Biggs was not so very old himself. However, he was old enough in experience to know that she would certainly scream if he even touched her hand, yet she would secretly despise him if he didn't do something to assert himself and regain control of his own boat.

Biggs pondered for a moment and then bethought himself of a trick which he hoped the ingenious and romantic professor had neg-

lected to mention. While Dorothy, the usurper, was fussing with the hairpin which she was afraid would fall out and thus bring defeat, he quickly opened a hatch in the small forward deck, reached down and turned the gasoline off at the tank. What was left in the pipe running aft to the engine he knew would last about two minutes and then, hairpin or no hairpin, the fair mutineer would be undone. Quite cheered by this reflection Biggs refilled and lit his pipe. He sat down and gazed at Dorothy in a friendly manner for a moment until another thought struck him. In pursuance of this he quietly and rapidly got out his fishing tackle and some clam meat which was stowed away in a seat locker, baited the hook and then calculated to the second just when Dorothy's troubles would begin.

"Miss Dorothy," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "this is a fine place to fish. Would you mind stopping a bit?" But the captain *pro tem.* scorned to notice him. She was planning to make a landing on the small stretch of beach below her brother-in-law's house, get

out and walk home, and leave Biggs to do what he liked with his boat.

"Ahem!" coughed Biggs. "Miss De Poe! This is an excellent place to fish. Would you please stop the boat a minute?"

Just then the carburetor got the last drop of gasoline, the engine gave a final snort and died.

"Thank you," said Biggs, just as though Dorothy had stopped the boat on his account.

Dorothy did not say, "Don't mention it, Mr. Biggs," or "You are welcome, Mr. Biggs." She merely looked at Biggs. A deep suspicion came over her that she had been duped. She recalled his peculiar and hasty movements at the forward compartment. She remembered an occasion on which the skilful Fairbanks had fussed around in an identical fashion, except that that gentleman—she mentally emphasised "gentleman"—had pronounced that there was no gasoline, instead of silently sitting down to fish. She looked at Biggs again, but his back was turned. He did not have the anxious appearance of a man

whose launch was drifting to sea without a drop of gasoline aboard. He had turned it off, she was sure. She reached down and tickled the carburetor. It tickled all right, but the cooling flow of gasoline down the little wire and along one's finger that invariably accompanies that operation did not materialise. The carburetor was as dry as a bone!

She stared at Biggs once more, then turned her back and gazed stonily across the widening stretch of water that separated her from home. Presently she heard a joyous shout from the enemy. Biggs was pulling in a flashing perch. "By Jove!" he shouted. "Isn't it a beauty?"

CHAPTER X

DOROTHY'S TRIUMPH

BIGGS drew in a second flapping fish and slowly took the hook out of its mouth. But his eyes weren't half so firmly fixed on this task as his manner would indicate. He was really watching Dorothy. That young woman's calm face expressed nothing into which Biggs could read an appreciation of the situation. He, the owner of the launch, had asserted his authority by the gentle means of a joke. He had known in his courteous soul that an open and direct rebuke wouldn't do. So he had carefully perpetrated a joke, as a nice way of showing her that her place wasn't running the engine. But—did she see the joke?

Here Biggs jabbed his thumb into the un-offending fish's mouth and pulled savagely at the hook. A jest unseen and unappreciated

was awful to contemplate. If Dorothy hadn't perceived the humorous intention behind his stopping the engine, what *did* she think? He flung the perch into a box and stared at her thoughtfully. She glanced at him modestly, then dropped her eyes. It was perfectly evident that she didn't see the joke. Probably, thought Biggs, she was trying to discover some explanation for his absurd behaviour, and the thought that his guest for the time was delving into his mental process made a vivid flush overrun Biggs's countenance. He felt almost immodest. He bitterly remembered the jibes cast upon the British nation for its inability to see the point to American humour. Now he knew how a race feels when its choicest jests and quips are received with a blank stare or a demure meditateness. But what to do? He cast his bait once more.

Meanwhile Dorothy maintained an attitude of maidenly expectancy, dashed with bewilderment and a slight air of amazement that Biggs should be so funny. She knew exactly what had happened and what Biggs hoped to

gain by his wily manœuvre. She also knew that if she didn't appear to see any humour in it, and generally conducted herself as though she were surprised, but ready to expect anything from Mr. Biggs in the way of rudeness and impoliteness, that he, too, would fail to discern the joke. So she looked simple and girlish and demure and shy, and wondered how he would extricate himself.

When he saw that he must take the initiative, Biggs thought of at least ten foolish things he could say and a dozen silly things he might do. Wisdom, however, appeared to have fled. He could not think of a thing to say that wouldn't give the whole joke to the dogs. There was nothing to do but surrender. Possibly, if he could conjure up the right idea, this capitulation might be made with some of the honours of war. He pondered it, careless of the jerking of his line while a perch wondered what it had eaten that took so long to swallow. An inspiration arrived on belated wings.

"I think you must have had enough of

this fishing, Miss Dorothy," he remarked. "Shan't we start on?"

She looked at him gravely. "I think it would be best," was her reply. "You see I'm getting chilly. And we're drifting with the tide towards an awfully shallow place, aren't we?"

Biggs glanced hastily round and saw a few yards off a perfect jungle of weeds that lifted their limp heads to the surface of the water. The launch was drifting straight for them. Visions of a snagged propeller and wading to his waist, and having to apologise for getting into such a mess swept over him. He jumped up and taking the engine flywheel in his hands twirled it over. It sighed and stopped.

"I think——" began Dorothy and then was silent, a mere wisp of a smile flitting across her lips.

Biggs flushed, this time a brick red, and in complete surrender went to the forward compartment and turned on the gasoline. "I forgot——" he stammered.

But Dorothy refused even to smile at him.

She watched him tickle the carburetor and start the engine. As the launch chugged away from the weeds she reached over to the wheel and brought the *Spithead* swinging round on her course for the landing at Tidewater. "Thank you," said the humbled Biggs.

Presently he brightened up. "I forgot we had to get some gasoline for Biddle's automobile. I'll get a can of it in town and we'll take it back to them."

"They'll have left before you can get back," Dorothy said coldly.

Biggs fell into despondency again till another thought struck him. "But I thought you said they couldn't get home without it!"

"They don't know that," Dorothy explained. "So they'll start and go as far as they can and then they'll stop. You see, it's an endurance run and they only took two gallons along; they want to find out how far that will take them."

"Ha, Ha!" Biggs remarked.

"It's exceedingly funny, isn't it?" Dorothy agreed without a smile.

Biggs subsided once more, but roused himself presently and asked humbly, "How far do you think they'll get before they stop?"

"They might get back as far as Salmon Point Hill," was the indifferent response.

"Then," said Biggs triumphantly, "we'll get the gasoline and meet them there. That'll be a great joke!"

"I hope it will be a successful one," Dorothy commented with gentle sarcasm. "So many jokes are stupid, you know!"

"Ah, er—so they are, don't you know," was the crestfallen Biggs's reply. Later he changed the subject skilfully. "Er—do you like launching or automobiling best, Miss Dorothy?"

Dorothy answered this very carefully, outwardly languid however. "I really don't know! It depends on who is with me. I did enjoy the ride this morning so much. I like Mr. Harkaway. Don't you? He's so interesting and he makes one feel so comfortable. Besides, he takes everything nicely and looks after one so. I think comfort is everything,

don't you, Mr. Biggs? You know what I mean—being sure that nobody is going to do the wrong thing.”

“Oh, ah, yes, of course,” he mumbled. Then, “I'm glad you won't have the discomfort of sitting in that bally motor waiting for gasoline, Miss Dorothy.”

She relented and smiled. “Are you sure we can get some?” she inquired. “You know this is Sunday and nobody is in the shops.”

“Trust me,” said Biggs nobly. “If I can't get it anywhere else I'll go and get some at Mrs. Thompson's. She always has plenty, I'm sure—big tank in the garage.”

“Oh, would you really go and steal it?” Dorothy exclaimed with a ravishing smile. “What fun!”

“No, not steal it, exactly,” said Biggs hastily. “That would be quite unnecessary. I'll ask for some and then Biddleson can return it to-morrow.”

Dorothy's smile vanished. “I'm so sorry. I'd hoped for a minute that we were going to have some fun. It would be so amusing to

see an Englishman stealing gasoline on Sunday!"

Biggs seemed to think this sort of conversation was dangerous, and he remarked that if they landed near the steamer wharf it would be more convenient to the stores. Dorothy accepted this suggestion and five minutes later swung the launch up under the dripping piles in seamanlike fashion. Biggs made the painter fast and then said politely, "If you don't mind waiting just a moment, I'll fetch the gasoline directly."

"Oh, I don't mind," Dorothy returned. "But I don't dare to think of Miriam sitting in that automobile all night making suggestions while Rae tries to make the engine go with a monkey wrench. So please hurry!"

Biggs nodded reassuringly, scrambled up to the wharf and disappeared. While he was gone Dorothy extracted the hairpin from the battery switch and thoughtfully thrust it back into her hair. Then she smiled to herself.

In ten minutes Biggs was back, looking over the edge of the wharf. "Every shop in town

is shut up and I can't find any of the shopkeepers," he said miserably.

"Then you'll *have* to go and get some from Mrs. Thompson," was Dorothy's prompt answer.

"But I say, she's gone, too!" said the wretched Biggs. "I telephoned, and nobody answered."

"You said you'd go," Dorothy protested. "Even if you had to steal it!"

Biggs shook his head. "That was a joke," he murmured feebly.

Dorothy set her lips firmly. "We must have that gasoline, even if you have to steal it. I can't bear to think of Miriam sitting over there in that wretched car all night. If you won't get it, I shall! So there!"

"Then," said Biggs, just as firmly, "we will go to Mrs. Thompson's." He got down into the boat and with great dignity said to Dorothy, "You will allow me, Miss De Poe?" Miss De Poe relinquished her place by the engine; Biggs thrust the brass plug into the hole and started the engine.

Biggs at the wheel, looking as nearly like Fairbanks as he could, and doing it pretty well considering he had never seen him, they steered straight for the tremendously expensive—"It cost a *whole* fifty thousand," Mrs. Thompson was fond of telling—stone pier that jutted out into Marie Jean Bay at the Thompson residential fortifications.

Devonshire Hall looked even more picturesquely bizarre from the water front than it did from the rear. Its battlemented cedar shingle walls frowned down on an elaborate plantation of rose bushes. Carefully installed on solid masonry, north of the summer house, where the sun never shone on it, was an exceedingly scientific and costly sun-dial. Mrs. Thompson had insisted on having it placed exactly where it was because it was more conspicuously visible there when strangers and visitors drove across the drawbridge and entered the grounds. Three lofty wind mills with the manufacturer's name painted in big, black letters on both sides of the rudder reared their whirling heads in different parts of the

yard. Every time Harkaway passed Devonshire Hall and had it thrust on his attention thrice conspicuously that Jimcrack & Co. were the makers of these wind mills he thought what a splendid advertisement it was for Jimcrack & Co. He had had some idea of offering Thompson ten dollars a month for the privilege of erasing Jimcrack & Co's. name and painting on them his own advertisement: "See Harkaway's Addition Before You Buy." But he had never got around to it.

Undeterred by the pretentious architectural features of the Thompson place Biggs brought the *Spithead* swiftly and gracefully up against the stone pier on the down-stream side, deftly threw a line ashore, jumped out after it and fastened it to a cleat. With Dorothy, who thought she would like to go along, he strode determinedly toward the garage.

The garage was a new structure of the Spanish Mission style of architecture, built of cement blocks. It harmonised perfectly with the general incongruity which characterised the whole place, and only lacked a cupola and

a bell to make it look like a church. Biggs recognised it as the garage by the trail of lubricating oil leading up to it, across the cement roadway. They went in the open door, Biggs stamping loudly to attract attention. No one appeared in answer to this summons. All was silent, clean and orderly. Here was an electric *coupé* for Mrs. Thompson's own private use. She had never used it, because she could never remember which way to shove the tiller-like steering handle when she wanted to go around a corner. It had been carefully and repeatedly explained to her that when she wanted to go north she must push the handle south, and vice-versa; also vice-versa as regards east and west. She was sure the large dials of the ammeter and voltmeter were a compass and steam gauge, and refused to have anything to do with it. Anyway, the electric lacked the power to go up the hill approaching the Thompson residence (it was towed up the day they got it) which prevented anyone else from using it; so it stood immaculately clean and stylish near the door, as ex-

pensive in appearance and as useful as the sundial over in the shade by the summer house. In a dark corner, where no one would ever think of looking for anything, was a maroon-coloured, one-cylinder car as disreputable and ancient in looks as it was powerful and steady in action. Mrs. Thompson had acquired a complete forgetfulness of that vehicle, though she sometimes spoke vaguely of their "First car." It was used on dark nights to send Mrs. Thompson's poor relations home when they stayed to dinner; and occasionally McLean, the engineer, had it out for a "joy ride." McLean's joy rides consisted of a trip to the Half-Way House on the road to Tidewater, and an immediate return with a good sized box containing mysterious objects packed in straw. They may have been eggs, or electric light bulbs, or they may have been cans of lubricating oil. However that might be, each of McLean's joy rides (almost invariably a Saturday night affair) was followed next day by strange and gloomy actions on his part. Peculiar and unexplainable accidents occurred

to the mechanical arrangements of which he was the presiding genius. He became intensely religious and morose—religious as befitting the day, and morose as befitting the temperament of a Scot on a Sabbath morning. No compatriot of his in his native town across the Sea, wending his way sternly and undeviatingly along the streets of Dundee, helped onward to his salvation by the hopeful ringings of some church bells, or impelled towards his doom by the harsh jangling of others, could feel the need of spiritual uplifting, or have a more sepulchral taste in his mouth than did McLean the day that Biggs and Dorothy came to Devonshire Hall for gasoline.

Biggs stamped around some more, without rousing anyone. The big red touring car was out, very likely with Henri at the wheel. An empty can and the gasoline pump stood temptingly by. After a final stamp and a noisy rattle of the can Biggs approached the pump, picking up the five gallon can. "Really, I

think I'll draw this full and leave a note of explanation," he mentioned to Dorothy.

"We must have that gasoline," she returned, and Biggs under her radiant smile proceeded to fill the can full.

"Now I'll leave a note," he said.

Before he could even find a pencil, much less write the note or escape with the gasoline, a tall, lanky form surmounted by a mat of red hair rose from the depths of the one-cylinder car in the corner. This apparition, seemingly erecting itself as if from behind a boulder in a wild, desolate pass in the Scottish Highlands, glared at Biggs with eyes inflamed and red. In lieu of a claymore he had in hand an open Bible; a grimy finger marked a favourite passage in Ezekiel: "I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the Pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth."

This verse, particularly the allusion to the

drinking of water, was to McLean one of singular and appropriate helpfulness. All around it, the page was dark and greasy with countless thumbings on similar occasions. The words of the verse itself were almost illegible from the emphasis laid upon them in hours of agony and remorse. Just as Biggs was about to escape with his plunder, McLean broke his formidable silence. The words of themselves conveyed nothing of the suspicion and deadly insult that the Scot's manner and intonation put into them.

"Na, na, Meester Biggs," he said. "You'll no be gaein' awa' wi' the gasoline sae sune, A'm thinkin'."

"Why, McLean!" said Biggs in surprise. "I didn't know you were here."

"Ay, but I *am here*; and here I'm intendin' to stay, so put doon the gasoline, Meester Biggs."

"I hope," said Biggs haughtily, putting the can down, "that you don't think I intended to steal it?"

"Na, na, Meester Biggs, I ken weel eneuch

ye wadna steal it, but I didna hear ye say 'at Mrs. Thompson sent ye for 't."

"No," said Biggs coldly, "Mrs. Thompson didn't send me for it. I came for it. As there was no one about, I helped myself. I'll leave a note for Mrs. Thompson and pay for it to-morrow."

"Ay, but perhaps ye wudna think to pay for't i' th' morrow."

"Look here, my good fellow——" began Biggs angrily.

"Dinna ye ca' me a guid fellow," said McLean as he advanced upon Biggs in a threatening manner. "Ye needna haver wi' me. Juist tak' yourself awa'! I dinna like the looks o' your face. Gin it werena the Sabbath day, I'd bash it in for ye."

Biggs was no coward, far from it; but gasoline was what he had come for and gasoline was what he was going to have, not the glory of a hard-won fight, nor the bruises and gore of an honourable defeat. Nevertheless, Biggs stood his ground. Outwardly he was calm; inwardly he was boiling with rage.

"I am sorry," he said with cold emphasis, "that it *is* Sunday."

Here was an opening that filled the valiant Scot with joy. "Is it a fecht ye want?" he demanded, a glad light coming over his face. In imagination the Celt could see a despised Southron grovelling, not in the dirt, but in a puddle of oil on the garage floor with an empty gasoline can jammed over his head by way of decoration. Although McLean was a hard man, he liked to give his conquests an artistically humorous finish. "Is it a fecht ye want?" he demanded again, fearful that presently Biggs would cease to be sorry that it *was* Sunday and thus deprive him (McLean) of a fitting *casus belli*. "Dinna ye think I'm scairt at ye!" He reverently closed the Bible, carefully placed it on the seat of the electric so that the Holy Word could not be damaged in the coming fray, and said, "I'm your man, gin it's a fecht ye want. The Lord forgi'e me, but they say the better the day the better the deed, so put up your han's an' I'll gie ye th' worst lickin' any Englishman's

had syne th' days o' Bannockburn!" With the blood of twenty generations of quarrelsome ancestry bubbling to the surface, McLean stood fiercely anxious, waiting for the enemy to proceed with his "fecht."

Biggs was pale, but not from fear. In a suppressed tone, his hands tightly clenched, his blood boiling as fiercely as that of any of McLean's wild, marauding forefathers could have boiled in the days of old, he said as calmly as he could, "You forget that there is a lady present. Restrain yourself, McLean."

"Oh, ay, I forgot," said McLean, relaxing his hostile tenseness. "But," he said by way of extenuation of his own inconsiderate conduct, "ye forgot yoursel', Meester Biggs, standin' there wi' your han's clenched a'ready for a fecht. I beg the bonnie lassie's pardon. Ye may hae th' gasoline, but ye'll be comin' around th' Saturday nicht, an we'll settle this little deef-ference of o-peen-ion. Awa' wi' ye before I forget 'at th' lassie's here, an I hit ye!"

But the bonnie lassie was not there! Either

to escape the horrors of battle, or to save the day and the gasoline, Dorothy was more than half way to the boat, half running, half stumbling in a lop-sided manner, weighted down with the five gallons of precious fluid.

"Oho!" exclaimed McLean, a genial smile chasing away his sour looks and removing the last trace of hostility with which he had greeted them as he saw Dorothy escaping. "Yon's a braw lassie, Meester Biggs, an' I wish ye luck. Run along, Biggs, my guid friend, and dinna ye forget th' Saturday nicht! But man," he continued, as he surveyed Biggs's stalwart form with approval, "I believe ye cud mak' a bonnie fecht." A look of deep disappointment came over his face as he remembered the great joys he had foregone. "Any Saturday will dae, Meester Biggs. Gie me your han' on it."

Biggs and McLean shook hands solemnly, and the former hurried after Dorothy. With the five gallons of gasoline in a safe place so that it would not fall overboard, the *Spithead* coughed her way triumphantly across Marie

Jean Bay, along the water front of Tidewater and across Ferdinand Arm. Skirting the shore so that he would not miss the picnic party in the auto, which he knew was stalled somewhere on the way back to town, Biggs rounded Salmon Point. Just at the bottom of Salmon Point Hill on the far side, Dorothy discerned her sister sitting on the grassy bank where she had sat the day before. Although the sun had set, Miriam held her parasol open over her head, a far-away look on her face, as though it had been ages ago since yesterday and would be ages again before she would see her home and fireside.

Harkaway was seated on a rock by the water's edge looking as if he expected someone. When the *Spithead* rounded the point, he was in the act of lighting a large fat cigar, as though to fortify himself for a still more protracted wait.

Biddleeson, of course, was on his back under the Durable, messing around with a screw driver, trying to find out why they were staying where they were.

When the *Spithead* ran in to shore, Harkaway rose to meet it. He held out his hand in an expectant manner and took the five gallon can that Biggs handed to him. "Thanks, old man," he said. "I *thought* you would come, but I didn't expect you so soon." Raising his cap cheerfully and politely to Dorothy, he went up to the road with the gasoline, while the launch backed her way out and was soon speeding home.

CHAPTER XI

DOROTHY EXPLAINS

BIGGS helped Dorothy up a slippery plank to the wharf. On the hill the church bell was ringing for the eight o'clock service. "I did intend to be at service to-night," Dorothy said repentantly. "But I can't possibly go in these clothes, so I'll go home and fix supper. Won't you come up and have supper with us, Mr. Biggs? Put your launch away and come up."

Biggs took off his cap. "I'm very sorry, thank you," he replied finally, "but I've got to go and check up the first freight for the early train in the morning."

"You've been awfully good," Dorothy went on, holding out a slim hand to him. "I'm sure Miriam will want to thank you herself." She departed, leaving Biggs with a strong impres-

sion that he had been gloriously forgiven for having been a dunce.

It was precisely nine o'clock when the Durable chugged its slow way up the hill, and stopped before the Biddleson cottage. Harkaway shut off the engine and watched Biddleson help Miriam down. "I wonder why Dorothy lit so many lights," was that weary matron's first remark when she felt herself on her own solid door step.

Before either of the men could offer an answer Dorothy herself appeared at the top of the steps and called down brightly, "Come on in, good people. Supper is ready!"

"Fine!" said Biddleson promptly. "Come on, Hark, drop that blessed steering handle, and wake up. Don't you hear Dorothy calling?"

"Of course," said Miriam pleasantly. "I won't hear of your going down town without supper, Mr. Harkaway."

With due gratitude and expressions thereof, Harkaway climbed out of the motor and joined his hosts in the front hall, where Dor-

othy beamed on them over a charming white apron, "I made Mr. Biggs simply race home so that I would be in time to get you something to eat," she told them. "But he wouldn't come up and help me get it!"

"I hope you didn't ask him, after all his performances to-day," said Mrs. Biddleson severely.

"Oh, but I did," was the reply. "I simply begged him, but the horrid thing had some freight to pack up, or something of that sort."

Biddleson and Harkaway feigned not to observe Miriam's lifted eyebrows, but went into the dining-room with all alacrity. In three minutes peace was assured and Biddleson was enlarging on the excellence of the Durable on hills.

Harkaway agreed that their purchase had done well so far as climbing grades was concerned. "But we'll have to revise our estimates on gasoline," he said.

"I don't see how you ever came to make such a mistake," Miriam commented.

"But Miss Dorothy seemed to find out be-

fore we did, that we were out of gasoline," said Harkaway with a glance towards the young woman who sat pouring tea.

Dorothy dimpled into a ladylike grin, but made no answer.

"If it hadn't been for you and Biggs," Harkaway went on, addressing her, "we'd have been there yet—or walking home."

"Horrors!" Miriam breathed at thought of this. Then she bent her pretty eyes on her sister. "Is that what you and Mr. Biggs went for in the launch—or did you see us stuck on the hill and then think of it?"

Dorothy still refused to answer, but Rae snorted defence of her. "They didn't have time to see us and then go and get gasoline. We weren't there twenty minutes before the launch came. Of course they knew it all the time."

"Then all I can say is that Mr. Biggs was very impolite," Miriam pouted.

"But he did his best," her husband said wonderingly. "What more do you expect?"

"Why didn't he tell us we didn't have gas-

oline enough in the first place?" she demanded.

Harkaway murmured something about Mr. Biggs's natural modesty. "Biggs is a sly chap," he continued thoughtfully, "but I am sure it was Dorothy who discovered that we didn't have gasoline enough, and who persuaded Mr. Biggs to come back to town and get some."

"And what a time we did have getting it!" Dorothy burst out. "I thought at first we'd have to steal it."

"Steal it!" exclaimed Miriam, aghast.

"Yes," Dorothy said maliciously. "I dared him to do it."

"I don't see——" Biddleston began, and then finished, "Where did you get the gasoline?"

"At Mrs. Thompson's!" This reply was followed by a strong silence. Harkaway seemed on the point of choking and Biddleston steadfastly refused to meet his wife's eyes. Dorothy passed the cakes, set the plate down and leaned her elbows on the cloth. "It was

too funny for anything," she went on, more demurely. "You see he was drunk——"

"Who was drunk?" inquired Miriam in an awful voice.

"And we were so afraid Mrs. Thompson would come and we wouldn't be able to explain," continued Dorothy, ignoring her sister, "and between pumping the oil out of the big tank into the can, and wondering what Mrs. Thompson would say if she did come and whether she would blame Mr. Biggs for it, or me, I nearly died. Then I had to run for it!"

"Ha HA! Ha HA!" Biddleston laughed loudly, choking himself off at the end in a valiant attempt to display an unmirthful, Sabbath countenance. His wife rose majestically. "I think that I am glad Mr. Biggs is not here," she announced. "Otherwise I am afraid I should have to express to him what my real opinion of him is."

"It was the engineer—that Scotchman—who was drunk and made all the trouble," Dorothy remarked, apparently thinking that her sister had supposed that it was Mr. Biggs.

"Oh, Biggs isn't such a bad fellow!" Harkaway said weakly.

"I think he's just fine!" Dorothy asserted. "If it hadn't been for him you'd have been stuck up on that old road all night. And he hated to do it, let me tell you! He seemed to think that I'd never be able to look Mrs. Thompson in the face!"

Biddleston showed active worry. "Look here, Dollie, just what did you do?"

"Why, we got you some gasoline," she replied, much aggrieved. "You had to have it, and all the stores were closed and so Mr. Biggs and I went up to Mrs. Thompson's garage to see whether we couldn't borrow some from her."

Miriam walked away from the table, and Harkaway assumed an air of great anxiety, seeming delicately to express a sense that his own social standing had been in some way compromised. Dorothy continued her narrative: "And we couldn't find Mrs. Thompson nor Mr. Thompson nor the chauffeur, so I dared Mr. Biggs to go in and steal some.

And he was trying to, when the engineer caught us, and he was drunk and made an awful fuss, and Mr. Biggs was going to hit him but didn't, and when we got the can full I just hustled to the launch with it, let me tell you!"

"Then you didn't see Mrs. Thompson?" said Harkaway, pretending to be vastly relieved.

"Oh, yes," said Dorothy simply. "I saw her coming just as we were leaving in the launch, but we didn't wait to explain. You see, the engineer was so impolite!"

"Ha HA!" Biddleston broke out again. And Harkaway joined him, thinking to himself that for once Biggs had had an opportunity which he, Harkaway, was glad to have escaped. Because of this he warmly defended Biggs and even went so far as to say that had he been in Biggs's place he would have funk'd the whole business. "And, in that case, you'd be sitting in the automobile yet," he concluded.

"Well, I certainly shall never try to explain to Mrs. Thompson," said Miriam emphatically.

"But you'll have to!" Dorothy returned with a smile. "I promised Mr. Biggs faithfully that you'd go over and explain it all tomorrow."

"Never!"

"Oh, come now, Miriam," put in her husband.

"Mrs. Thompson will think it's all a joke," Harkaway offered peaceably.

"It *is* a joke," Dorothy pouted. "And if you people are going to be so horrid about it I'll never again, never, save you from staying out all night."

"You'll never have the chance," said her sister acidly. "I intend to see that you don't disgrace us any more while you're here. The idea—stealing into people's garages with that Biggs man."

"He didn't want to go, Miriam," Dorothy protested and seemed astonished when this remark didn't reinstate Biggs. At this point Harkaway tactfully opined that he must take the machine to its garage down town, and offered good nights to everybody. Miriam

beamed on him at parting and Dorothy shook hands with gentle resignation. "I know you think I'm horrid," she said. "But Mr. Biggs is so interesting!"

When Harkaway had left the room, accompanied by Biddleston, Miriam turned her full gaze on her sister, a gaze mingled of amazement, reproach, rebuke and anger. "It's evident that college life has spoiled your manners," she coldly remarked.

"I learned something about gasoline engines, they are a lot more use than manners nowadays," was the defiant retort.

"I'm astonished at you," Miriam pursued evenly. "When I was your age girls didn't think about such things!"

"Because there weren't any such things," Dorothy said saucily. "Remember you're almost middle aged."

"And a young woman knew how to conduct herself properly with young men," said Miriam, scorning to notice this rude remark. "I suppose from your behaviour to-day that you must have made a perfect guy of yourself

in college. Did you learn, may I ask, to desert your guests and break into people's places and steal, at college? Was it there that you learned to run off from your own picnic with a strange man?"

"I shouldn't call Mr. Fairbanks a strange man," Dorothy murmured.

"Fairbanks!" echoed her sister, sitting down wearily. "Who was this Fairbanks? Some ruffian, I suppose!"

"He is an engineer," Dorothy explained, flushing.

Mrs. Biddleston's expression was one of renewed horror. "Dorothy de Poe! Do you mean to say that you actually knew an engineer! a man in overalls and a greasy cap! Why did I ever allow you out of my sight? This is awful!"

"Mr. Fairbanks doesn't wear overalls, at all! He's an instructor in the university and one of the most popular men there," Dorothy replied warmly. "He knows all sorts of things no one else ever heard of and he had a launch on the lake and an auto, and he and

his sisters were as nice to me as they could be. They're somebody, too, let me tell you!"

"I should like to see this Mr. Fairbanks," Miriam retorted witheringly.

A sudden gleam of mischief came into Dorothy's eyes and she said quietly, "Well, you will see him no later than next week! I wrote and invited him to come and visit us for a month, as he is making a trip of the West anyway."

Her sister rose hastily and walked towards Dorothy. "Is it possible—do you mean to tell me——" she stammered.

Dorothy was frightened for the moment. It occurred to her that her rashly given invitation might indeed have needed endorsement. It was her sister's house, not her own. But she had bravely written the letter as at her sister's request, and so far as Mr. Fairbanks's view of his coming was concerned, all was regular. Mrs. Biddleston was his hostess and Mr. Biddleston his host. But how should she make Miriam live up to the character given her in the letter?

Dorothy was a little afraid this would be difficult, for Miriam was not only angry but in a stubborn temper. She smiled. "Now, Miriam, don't get so stirred up over nothing! I got a note from Mr. Fairbanks, telling me of his plans and that he hoped to come to the bay here. And of course I wrote to him that you and Rae would be delighted to have him come here for a short visit."

"A month!" Miriam repeated, tragically.

"A month's really awfully short, if you like a person," was Dorothy's careless response. "And if I don't like him, I'll send him along in a week."

"A week!" Miriam commented in a faint voice.

Dorothy turned on her savagely. "Yes, a week! And if you can't be nice to a college professor for one week in this little hole I'll send him off in an hour."

"Dorothy, how dare you!"

Dorothy stared at her sister a moment, bit her lip, stamped her foot, and then fled into the front hall where she still heard her brother-

in-law and Harkaway in deep confab. As she burst upon them with flushed cheeks and suspiciously moist eyes, Harkaway opened his mouth and closed it without any audible reason. Biddleleson glanced up and stopped in the exact middle of the word "Gasoline," making a sound like, "Gas-oh!"

"Oh, Rae, please make Miriam behave," said Dorothy plaintively.

"What has she done now?" Biddleleson inquired, anxiously watching for tears.

"She's been perfectly horrid about Mr. Fairbanks!"

"Who the deuce is Mr. Fairbanks?" her brother-in-law demanded, while Harkaway scraped his feet on the rug preparatory to escaping.

"I invited him here to visit us," Dorothy explained proudly. "And he's coming and Miriam is *rude* about it."

"But who is he?" Biddleleson insisted.

"He's a professor in the university, and he's coming out West on a trip, so I asked him to come here," she went on. "I thought of

course you'd be glad to see a friend of mine and be nice to him."

"Of course we shall," Biddleston said with forced heartiness. "Won't we, Hark, old boy?"

Harkaway mumbled something about "great pleasure" and relapsed into silence.

Dorothy surveyed them a moment and then resumed all her dignity. "I'm sorry to have bothered you all," she remarked coldly. "Anyway, I'm sure Mr. Fairbanks would find it dull here. I believe I'll write and tell him not to come." She set one slim foot on the bottom stair, looked over their heads and departed. As she vanished past the landing, Miriam came out. "Of all the things!" she breathed. "I didn't think that any sister of mine could accomplish in one day all the things that Dorothy has achieved. Really, I think——"

"I really must be going," said Harkaway hastily.

"I feel I owe you an apology, Mr. Harkaway," Miriam went on stiffly. "I shall speak

to Dorothy about her conduct. She's only a young girl and needs a careful hand."

Biddle-son stared at his wife and then at Harkaway. Then he suddenly burst out laughing, "Ha, HA! Ha HA!" he roared.

In the grim silence that followed this outburst, Harkaway took his departure. As the Durable chugged away with him Mrs. Biddle-son surveyed her husband through flowing tears. "*I hate* automobiles!" she cried. "I'll never allow you to get another one!"

CHAPTER XII

THE PROFESSOR LOSES HIS SUIT CASE

JAMES HARDY, whose first experience of Tidewater was Biggs's prophecy (by means of his renowned barometer) of a first-class gale, didn't return to Rockland, Maine, in spite of the failure of the anticipated storm to appear. Instead, he resolved himself into a homeseeker. De Poe Bay appealed to him, he said, because it united the charms of his native coast with a mild and equable climate. He could enjoy the sea and the winds and yet not worry about his wood pile, or look up pneumonia in the encyclopedia every time the breeze crimped his face. And he said that Harkaway's property over on Shelter Arm struck him as exactly the spot for his new home.

Mr. Hardy had already presented his letters at Thompson's bank, passed the usual com-

ments on the gold pieces he was given instead of the customary greenbacks, and now was devoting himself to wooing Harkaway into setting a fair price on his land in Harkaway's Addition. Without following the negotiations closely, it may be said that they ran about as follows:

Monday. Harkaway's price is \$20,000 cash. Hardy suggests \$8000.

Tuesday. They both go across in Biggs's launch and look at the place, Harkaway finally offering to sell one-half the parcel for \$7800.

Wednesday. Harkaway refuses to sell at any price. Hardy goes back to the hotel and reads last year's almanac till supper time, when he remarks that real estate agents at Tidewater seem to lack business sense. At night Hardy writes a letter to Harkaway offering \$9500 for the whole place.

Thursday. Harkaway says he has decided to sell but will not take less than \$14,000.

Friday. Hardy appears at Harkaway's office with a check for \$11,000 and tells Harkaway to take it or leave it. Harkaway says he

will take twenty-four hours to decide it. He instantly goes down to see Biddleston and thereby gets an invitation to dinner.

Saturday. Harkaway refuses the check on the unpublished ground that he is to go picnicking Sunday with the Biddlestons and Dorothy.

Monday. Hardy consults an architect and builder about plans for a house. In the afternoon Harkaway says he'll take the \$11,000.

Tuesday. Harkaway fails to have a deed ready and says he has almost changed his mind about selling.

One might extend this catalogue indefinitely. On the one hand Harkaway represented to the life a man who was absolutely incapable of knowing his own mind; on the other Hardy grew more and more eager to obtain the property. "I can't make out what is the matter with that fellow," he complained to Mr. Thompson, after reciting the peculiar course of the negotiations. "He doesn't seem to be trying to raise the price on me—the place is worth every cent he asks for it—but he doesn't

seem to know whether he intends to sell or not. I calculate he's in business to sell real estate. Now why does he behave this way? It ain't businesslike! We don't do things that way back East! We'd be sent to the asylum, if we did!"

The banker didn't know. He vaguely gave Harkaway as good a character as he could, considering that Harkaway dealt with the other bank. No, he didn't know, he said: Mr. Harkaway did business across the street. Biddle-son, who overheard the conversation, was illuminated. That night he told Miriam what Hardy had said to Thompson and remarked, "I'll bet Harkaway is waiting to hear what Dorothy will say."

As Mr. Fairbanks was expected to arrive the next day, Miriam merely pursed her lips and said if one could only guess what Dorothy would do next, etc., etc., one could think what Harkaway had better do.

"But why not tell Dorothy about it?" Biddle-son suggested. "Hark may never have so good a chance to sell again."

"Tell Dorothy?" exclaimed Miriam in great scorn. "If you know what is best, Rae Biddle-son, you'll tell Dorothy nothing!"

"But why?" persisted Biddle-son. "It isn't fair to Hark. I know he's hanging to that deed just to see whether she doesn't like him well enough to marry him, and then they could build out there."

"If you breathe a word of this to Dorothy you may as well inform Mr. Harkaway that he had best sell his land," was Mrs. Biddle-son's somewhat ambiguous reply.

Her husband thought this over, but didn't say anything further. "I don't believe Miriam understands Dorothy," he thought to himself. "Even if they are sisters, Miriam has always acted as though Dorothy were a child. I'll see about this myself!" He came to this decision with great inward satisfaction, and a warm anticipation of the triumph he would have when he had "made it all right between the young folks."

He was for going right down stairs to fix it up on the spot, but he looked over the railing

and saw Dorothy busy over some sewing by the fire in the hall. "To-morrow will be time enough," he determined.

But in the morning breakfast was late, for some occult reason connected with the arrival of Professor Fairbanks in the evening, and Biddleson had to hurry to reach the bank on time, though he took his bicycle. Then at noon he slipped back, but only had time to swallow his luncheon, and when he reached home in the evening it was to find the young instructor already installed in the guest chamber. As he went to Fairbanks's door to do his office as host he mentally put the whole matter over till the next day.

When he had knocked and had been admitted he shook hands heartily with his guest. "I'm Biddleson," he told him. "Just dropped in to see whether you were all right and had everything necessary."

Professor Fairbanks was a young man—very young for his position, Biddleson thought—and he apparently had lived a care-free life. His face was smooth and pleasant, his shoul-

ders square. But at this moment he seemed to have been overtaken by the sorrows of the Ages. "Everything necessary?" he repeated with a forced laugh. "I'm sorry to say that the agent at the wharf down here failed to put my suit case off the tug and into the hack, and I find myself here without a solitary thing except what's in the depths of my trunk. And your wife informs me that the tug doesn't make another trip to Bones till to-morrow, and that's where my trunk is, I fear."

"Hard luck," said Biddleson sympathetically. "But I'll help you out to-night, old chap. Funny thing, though, too; Biggs is usually pretty careful about seeing that passengers get their belongings off the boat. Quite obliging, really."

"Is that the agent's name?" inquired the professor sharply. "He is a very ignorant man, indeed! I distinctly hunted him up and told him I was coming to your house, said I understood it was quite a distance and that I must have a hack. I told him I'd left my suit case on the boat and to go and get it and put

it beside the driver. I even tipped him a quarter to make sure he would look after it."

"Tipped him!" echoed Biddleleson in dismay, then hastily changed the subject. Mr. Fairbanks ruffled up his black hair and refused to leave Biggs as a topic. "It was inexcusable," he pursued, growing angrier and angrier, as he thought of his dusty clothes, and the prospective meeting with Dorothy. "I nearly missed the tug looking for my trunk at Bones, and then to lose my hand luggage through the beastly stupidity of an agent! I made sure he had put it up beside the driver, and it wasn't till I reached here that I found the driver had never seen it. I shall interview that agent to-morrow."

"Certainly, oh! of course, to-morrow," Biddleleson answered hurriedly. "Now you're all right just as you are. We don't put on any style here, you know. Wild and woolly and all that. When you're ready, just come down."

As Biddleleson left his guest and proceeded down the hall, a prolonged ring at the bell

made him glance into Miriam's room to say, "My dear, who can that be? Are we going to have somebody else to dinner?"

"It's Mr. Harkaway," Mrs. Biddleston returned, giving a final pat to her hair. "He always comes early, you know. Dorothy insisted on having him and Mr. Biggs. Mr. Biggs telephoned he would be late. He's coming in his launch."

"Biggs!" said Biddleston feebly. "Tonight!"

Miriam turned slowly round from the glass to confront her husband. "Why do you gasp that out like a dying fish?" she inquired severely.

Biddleston looked at her emptily, burst out with a "Ha HA!" and vanished, leaving behind him the impression that he had been insulting. Miriam pondered this, and then went capably down to see to the putting on of dinner.

In the sitting-room Biddleston greeted Harkaway awkwardly and on the almost immediate arrival of Fairbanks introduced them, before

Dorothy, emerging tidily aproned from the pantry, could say a word to either. Then the four of them sat down and commenced the vacuous chat which always precedes actual conversation among the socially correct. Harkaway having duly asked the professor the usual questions was gratified by the customary answers. Then Dorothy brought up the subject of Mr. Fairbanks's luggage, and that gentleman, not having done more than mention its lack to his hostess, seized the chance to expound his grievance against the agent at the dock. Dorothy, hearing the details for the first time, looked astonished, then demure, and finally, when her guest stated that he fully intended to go back next morning and demand the return of his quarter, got up and left the room with an interested expression on her face. As she departed she heard Harkaway's quiet tones. He was saying, "I wouldn't be too hard on good old Biggs. He's a fine fellow. He could not have understood what you wanted."

"He seemed to understand the tip, all right,"

Fairbanks commented aggressively. "For at first he wouldn't take it and asked me whether I thought it was enough."

Biddleeson, leaning forward, elbows on knees, greeted this with an inane laugh which instantly sank into a sickly grin when the bell rang again. In the hall Miriam's voice was heard saying, "You weren't late after all! Come in, Mr. Biggs!"

"I'm awfully glad," they heard Biggs say anxiously, as if he had committed a social *faux pas*. "Really, I was sure I should be late. I left directly I was free."

"That must be our friend Biggs," said Harkaway, striving to make up for Biddleeson's speechless discomfiture. "I know you'll like him, Professor. We all like him. Queer chap, but first-rate."

Fairbanks, not connecting Biggs the agent with Biggs the guest, smiled amiably. "It's awfully good of Mrs. Biddleeson to go to all this trouble to entertain me," he said to Biddleeson. "I'm sure I shall have a delightful time."

"I hope so," stammered his host, afraid to look towards the door.

"Miss Dorothy would make anybody have a good time," Harkaway put in genially. "She's waked us all up."

"I'm sure she has," replied Fairbanks, politely, looking curiously at Biddleston, who was suddenly consumed with immoderate laughter.

Further exchange of remarks on this subject was barred by the entrance of Biggs, who walked composedly in, nodded to Harkaway, shook hands with Biddleston, now preternaturally serious, and promptly sat down near Fairbanks, apparently without seeing him.

"Biggs," said Harkaway quickly, "you must meet Professor Fairbanks."

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Biggs cordially, getting up, locating the professor and then shaking his hand warmly. "Have you been here long, sir?"

Before Fairbanks could formulate any reply—a matter of mental and physical difficulty—Dorothy appeared again—apronless, this time—and announced dinner. As the others

passed out she shook hands with Biggs and said, "I'm glad you weren't late. I wanted you to meet Mr. Fairbanks. He's interested in launches and such things. I'm sure you will find him charming!"

"If he's charming in your eyes, that ends his chances with us chaps," Biggs said boldly.

Dorothy hurried away to hide her blushes, while Biggs stopped, adjusted his tie and slowly, deliberately settled his face into a solemn, austere expression which, he trusted, would affect the professor into silence regarding the occurrences of the afternoon. Fairbanks was Dorothy's guest and she wasn't to be embarrassed if Biggs could help it.

When they were seated Biddleston devoted himself so strictly to his carving that Miriam, for once, was satisfied. As she looked round the nicely dressed table from the handsome, calm Harkaway to the dark, athletic Fairbanks and the clean, wholesome Biggs and saw that they were all respectfully looking at her younger sister, she thought gratefully of Providence. And with this pleasant feeling and in

a desire to promote it among others, she chose the first opportunity (Rae was doing very well with the carving!) to speak out and say, "I hope you enjoyed your trip over to this town, Professor?"

"Immensely," said Fairbanks, devoting himself to persuading Dorothy to have three olives with her soup.

"So many people say it's hard travelling," Miriam went on calmly. "But I'm sure one doesn't have half the trouble with trains and boats that one does in getting about in street cars and such things."

To his dying day Biddleston never knew why he interrupted his wife at this point to state in a loud, firm voice, "I'll bet Fairbanks doesn't agree with you. He lost his suit case the very last thing to-day when he got off the boat."

Fairbanks replaced the olive dish thoughtfully, while Dorothy wondered where the pepper was and Harkaway tried to think of some problem in Applied Mechanics which would instantly absorb everybody's interest to the exclusion of the unlucky suit case. But Miriam,

blissfully ignorant of any awkwardness, was rather thankful to her husband for giving her so good an opportunity to be sympathetic. "It's too bad!" she exclaimed. "Now, if you had only known Mr. Biggs here—he would have helped you out. Mr. Biggs always sees to it that I don't miss anything. You see"—Miriam here decided to give Biggs a lift socially so as to put him on a par with her other guests—"You see he's almost the general manager and president of our road here, and when he goes and tells somebody to do something they always do it. Dorothy, why didn't you think to tell Mr. Biggs the professor was coming so that he could look out for him?"

Dorothy—not having found the pepper—didn't know. Miriam was inexorable. "Rae, I told you Mr. Fairbanks might get lost or something coming over. Why didn't you 'phone Mr. Biggs so he could look out for him?"

Biddleston struck the joint triumphantly and was absolved from reply.

At this point Mrs. Biddleston noticed that the

professor was crimson; not a gentle ruddy colour, but a dark, lurid red that seemed to come from some great internal distress, such as *angina pectoris*, or biting one's cheek or swallowing an olive stone. Oddly enough Dorothy was crimson, too, though her sister's quick eye referred this to the pepper which having been discovered in the kitchen had been brought in and lavished on Dorothy's soup. Harkaway was glumly trying to puzzle out that question in Applied Mechanics and get it into correct form to propound. Biggs was undisturbed and busy with his soup. So, as a diversion, Miriam addressed him. "I hope you can find the professor's suit case to-morrow, Mr. Biggs."

"Certainly," said the unabashed Biggs. "I'll tell the men to look out for it."

"You don't think it can really be lost?" she went on.

Biggs laid down his spoon. "No," he said decidedly. "Do you know, my barometer promises us bad weather?"

"You don't say so!" said Harkaway in a

tone that indicated that he had at last heard that the desire of his life was to be accomplished. "I knew it was going to storm when old man Hardy to-day came in and offered me a thousand dollars more for my property."

"I hope you didn't take it," said Miriam eagerly.

Harkaway shook a gloomy head. "No, I didn't, but he's getting pretty near to my price. You see the place is no good to me. What's the use of hanging on to it?"

"Oh, but it's such a lovely place for a home," Mrs. Biddleson replied.

"Oh, a home!" was the vacant response. "I hadn't thought of that."

Miriam turned to the professor winningly. "It's amazing how you young men turn up your noses at the thought of a home of your own," she remarked. "It seems to be the last thing you think of, Professor!"

Fairbanks swallowed two spoonfuls of soup and an olive before answering this. Then he said, nobly striving to play up to his hostess, "I suppose it's because most of us are such

chumps." He brought the last word out so forcibly that Dorothy was very sorry for him.

"But are you going to sell to Hardy, then?" Biddleleson put in.

"I don't know," Harkaway confessed. "I'll tell you! Let's all go over to-morrow in the auto and discuss it."

"That's a good idea," Mrs. Biddleleson conceded. "And I am sure Mr. Biggs will let us have the use of his launch. The motor only carries five, Professor," she explained, "and that at a pinch. Now, if you are a good launcher, you can take Mr. Biggs's boat and me and the lunch. Rae, Dorothy and Mr. Harkaway can call for Mr. Biggs in the automobile. We shall have a good picnic, and, you ought to see Mr. Harkaway's place. You'll be glad to let him have the launch, won't you, Mr. Biggs?"

"Certainly," said that amiable person, "but I am afraid it's going to storm. My barometer——"

"Oh, we know all about your barometer,"

interposed Dorothy. "You might just as well make it foretell a good day."

"I might," said Biggs, smiling "but——"

"But what?"

"But on the condition that I have the pleasure of taking you and Mrs. Biddleson in the launch. The rest can go in the automobile."

"I accept," said Dorothy smiling brightly, "although, after my last experience in the launch, I believe I'd prefer the auto. However, I will sacrifice myself for a fair day for the others."

"Oh, I say!" Biggs protested.

"If it's a sacrifice," Harkaway put in, "allow me to propose a real sacrifice, Miss Dorothy, a sacrifice that will not only display your unselfishness but insure Biggs's barometer being on its good behaviour: Let Biggs take everybody in the launch, and I'll take you and the luncheon in the auto."

Miriam so strongly approved of this plan that it put Biggs in the position of host to her and Fairbanks and Biddleson, and he saw no way out of it. It was so arranged, and later

in the evening Harkaway sought a word with Dorothy. "I'll be here at nine o'clock," he said.

"Come at eight," she said smilingly, "and then we can stop for early service. If I am to be self sacrificing, I must first attend to my religious duties or I will never get the credit for it."

Harkaway left early so that he might enjoy to the full the memory of how Dorothy said this.

CHAPTER XIII

BIGGS MAKES IT EASY FOR THE PROFESSOR

SERVICE was over and Harkaway stood on the little path in front of the church waiting for Dorothy to finish her chat with the rector, with whom she was discussing the date of her arrival, her probable stay and why she hadn't come to service before. To Harkaway there was a gentle pleasure in looking over the bay and knowing that Dorothy had just admitted him into that companionship and intimacy which, somehow, always attaches itself to going to church with a girl. He thought of the fact that she hadn't even mentioned church to Biggs, nor had she asked Fairbanks to go with her. He suddenly recalled her bowed head and folded hands with a swelling of the throat that surprised him. It seemed to remove him from the commonplaceness of existence and set him apart (with her) on sacred

ground. He turned to hear her addressing him.

"I'm ready now," she told him quietly. "I've remembered my sins and now for the penance! Is the car all right?"

"It ought to be," Harkaway replied, trying to take his eyes from Dorothy's dewily flushed face and fix them on the Durable. "Unless some small boys have dug into the tonneau and found our luncheon."

"Ah, that would be a sacrifice I'm not ready for—yet," Dorothy responded, climbing into a front seat. "It would be hard to be penitent and hungry, too."

Harkaway cranked the engine, it started easily and when he took his place behind the steering lever he felt perfectly happy. The car slipped down the hill towards the ferry, took the dip of the pitch to the shore and with screeching brakes pulled up on the apron of the ferry. "Those brakes are no good," he remarked briefly.

"They refuse to 'do good works silently,'" Dorothy acquiesced.

While the boat was slowly crossing they leaned back against the cushions and Harkaway carefully scanned the waters of the bay. "There's Biggs getting his launch ready," he said presently, pointing down to the far away wharf where the *Spithead* usually was.

Dorothy puckered up her eyes and looked too. "That must be Mr. Fairbanks in his shirt sleeves," she said quietly. "I wonder what became of his suit case!"

"Ask Biggs," Harkaway returned. "I believe he purposely put it somewhere out of the way. He wouldn't easily forgive that tip."

"But why!" Dorothy demanded. "It was very natural for Mr. Fairbanks to offer him the money; and besides, Mr. Biggs took it and kept it. Now, why did he steal his suit case and things?"

"I don't know exactly," Harkaway rejoined, carefully setting the brakes again as the ferry boat approached the landing. "But I imagine it was jealousy."

As Dorothy didn't seem to understand this, he explained. "Biggs probably saw that the

professor was good looking enough without his sweater and his yachting clothes, and he said to himself, 'Here's for the spoke in *his* wheel.'

"But I don't think that was nice, do you?"

"I'd have done the same thing myself, if I'd had the chance," Harkaway promptly remarked. "Anything to keep Fairbanks in the background!"

Dorothy was silent a moment before saying, "Poor Mr. Fairbanks, and he's so nice too!" Her tone was womanly and gentle.

Harkaway groaned. "That settles it!" he said dolefully. "Biggs has done it!" He opened the throttle, and the Durable coughed up the incline to the main road.

"Settles what?" demanded Dorothy, apparently mystified.

"Pity is akin to love," Harkaway responded painstakingly. "Biggs has made you pity the professor. Next thing you'll be falling in love with him. Then we're down and out!"

"How do you know——" Dorothy stopped with a sly glance at her companion.

"Know what?" asked Harkaway quickly.

"That I haven't already fallen in love?"

"I don't believe it!" was the quick response.

Dorothy looked him over carefully. "I don't believe you do," she said critically. "But then so many people don't believe true things!"

Harkaway digested this in silence and finally remarked, throwing in the low gear for the steepest part of the hill, "If you're in love with Mr. Fairbanks, I beg your pardon!"

"I don't remember mentioning Mr. Fairbanks," Dorothy replied thoughtfully.

The Durable topped the crest and proceeded to skirt the ridge that forms the skyline of Ferdinand Arm. Harkaway changed to the high gear, throttled the engine down and said irrelevantly, "Are you in an awful hurry to reach the picnic place?"

"We can't beat the launch, anyway," she replied. "And it's too lovely to miss all this scenery. Let's not hurry!"

"I'll take it dead slow," he responded, "if you will promise not to mention the professor—or Biggs."

Dorothy considered this, dimpling. "How

exacting you are!" she commented. "What *am* I to talk about?"

"You might tell me how you like my place over on the beach," Harkaway said boldly.

"But you've sold it," she replied demurely.

"No, Mr. Hardy wants it, of course. But so far I've held him off."

"Rae told me you were going to sell it," Dorothy insisted. "He said Hardy said you'd agreed to sell it."

"Well, I haven't sold it," Harkaway said firmly. "I shan't till I know whether you like it."

"I don't see what that has to do with the matter at all," Dorothy pouted.

"Everything," Harkaway affirmed, with great determination. "In the first place I like the place myself. I've always rather counted on having a home out there. In the second place," looking at her ardently, "I'm in love with you. My dear, you've no notion whatever how all sorts of things depend on whether you like them or not!"

Dorothy glanced over her muff at him for a

fleeting second, then dropped her warm eyes. She said nothing. Harkaway continued more feebly. "I know that with these Fairbankses and Biggses and all the fellows you have known in the East, I've got mighty little chance. But I'm going to take what chance there is! I don't mean to be ugly or spoil your ride or anything like that," he went on miserably as she still remained silent, "but I just have to tell you that I love you and want you to love me, and"—desperately—"my place."

The Durable shyed into the salal brush and when it was brought back into the road it stopped. Harkaway stared at the throttle and the spark control, then smiled wretchedly. "Doubtless, Miss Dorothy, you'd prefer to have me mind my chauffeuring. I've gradually slowed down things till it's a wonder the engine kept on going at all." He got out, cranked the engine and started the Durable on its way at a good speed.

Dorothy still maintained a silence so expressive that Harkaway felt beaten to the depths. What did he mean, he asked himself

savagely, by going at so delicate a subject like a heavy-handed fool? Of course no girl would want things so mixed up in a proposal. And nobody could propose decently when an automobile demanded both hands and both eyes. He devoted himself to the machine, not daring to look across at her, for fear he would see disgust too plainly written in her eyes. Suddenly he cut out the spark and stopped the car to stare at her hopefully. Dorothy had murmured, "Is that all?"

He saw only her eyes, looking straight into his with something, he didn't know what, burning in their depths that stirred him to the heart. "Not all," he said. "It would take me a year to tell it all. I've merely summed things up, Dorothy."

"But you've only known me a couple of weeks," she said.

"Apparently those are the only two weeks of my life that count."

"Oh!" she breathed.

He looked out over the Arm. Far in the distance he saw the minute speck that was

Biggs's launch. He turned back to the girl at his side. "You haven't said anything yet."

"I think we'd better be going on," was her matter-of-fact response, and for the second time Harkaway climbed disconsolately forth and cranked the engine. As he got back into his seat he couldn't see Dorothy's eyes. But he saw her blush under his searching stare and he suddenly was buoyed up by hope. "I'll make you love me," he stoutly asserted.

"And if I don't, you'll sell the place to Mr. Hardy?"

"Surely."

"I expect Mr. Hardy will give me a bonus not to marry you," she said lightly.

"I know you don't take it seriously," Harkaway groaned, falling headlong from the rosy clouds. "It's because I've only known you a couple of weeks."

Dorothy didn't seem disposed to answer this question, so he repeated it, with more assertiveness. She shook her head. "I do take it seriously, Mr. Harkaway; but——"

"But what?"

Dorothy allowed herself a little laugh. "Well, for one thing, I don't know what your first name is," she told him.

This, to Harkaway, seemed the very height of frivolity. What possible difference could it make whether or not she knew his name was Thomas? What did the minx mean by insisting on such foolish matters as how long she had known him, his first name and Mr. Hardy's possible bonus? As he was silent Dorothy explained a bit. "A girl simply *couldn't* decide whether she loved a man when she doesn't even know whether he's Charley or Jimmie or Billie! She's got to think it all over, you see, from every point of view!"

Harkaway didn't see, but he snappishly vouchsafed the required title: "Thomas."

Dorothy received this critically. And because she merely repeated it, as if she were sipping tea, or tasting a new kind of candy, her companion forgot his calm and grew angry. "Now that you know it," he said with a slight roughness of tone, "shall I let Mr. Hardy have the place?"

"Oh, of course, if it's a financial proposal, certainly," said the young woman with sudden chilliness. "Isn't Mr. Biggs making good time!"

"Ass!" muttered Harkaway savagely.

"Were you speaking of Mr. Biggs?" Dorothy demanded with dignity.

"No. I was addressing myself," Harkaway growled, opening up the engine till the Durable was plunging recklessly. And no more was said till ten miles further on he slowed for a hill and resumed, "Dorothy," he said bluntly, "I want you to understand distinctly that I love you deeply and I'd give anything in the world for even some hope that you could care for me. It isn't a question of anything but you. Is there—is there any chance for me?"

"But I've told you already," she said simply. "I've known you such a short time, and you've never before intimated that you wanted me to marry you—and," with a bewildering smile, "it would take a month at least to find out if I loved Tommie!"

The tone in which she repeated this name was deliciously maddening.

Harkaway tried to analyse it and failed. Somehow he understood that Dorothy wasn't in love with him just now, though whether she might hereafter love him was a question. Puzzling over this he drove the Durable up through the winding lane that led to the picnic grounds, and before he could formulate another query that might elicit a definite answer, Miriam welcomed them with a cry of delight. "We're all so hungry and you've got the luncheon!" she called out.

Harkaway brought the automobile to a stop and stared thoughtfully at Biggs, who was trying to build a fire with green ferns for kindling and only making a large smudge. "I forgot we had the luncheon," he said truthfully. "But we made good time, anyhow!"

"Good time!" echoed Biddleston, coming up. "We saw you stuck on the hill road for half an hour! I thought you said you could run an auto."

"He can!" Dorothy put in with great in-

dignation. "We weren't stuck at all. Mr. Harkaway stopped the car to—to show me something."

Fairbanks wandered up in time to catch this last. His face was studiously expressive of pleasure. "Well, we all envy Harkaway," he said.

"Didn't Mr. Biggs treat you nicely?" she demanded, accepting his hand to get out with.

Biggs looked over from his smudge. "The professor knows how to run an engine," he declared. "I really wasn't needed at all." He quietly resumed his labours with the refractory kindling.

As this conversation didn't seem to get anywhere, Harkaway turned off the gasoline and went over to help Biggs at the fire. Fairbanks promptly appropriated Dorothy and took her off to look at the ocean, which, he remarked in his scholarly way, was worth seeing. Biddleston avoided his wife's eye and went to poke an inquisitive nose into the coffee pot. "This time it won't taste of gasoline," he announced.

Biggs, willing to have his preparations for a fire undone and replaced by real kindling made with a knife, lit his pipe and stared after Fairbanks. "Is that young man a fair specimen of the young college American?" he demanded casually.

"Pretty fair," said Harkaway. "He's a good fellow, all right. Odd manners, sometimes, these chaps have; but they mean all right. What did you do with his suit case?"

Biggs grunted and pulled a slip of paper out of his pocket. "It was expressed to Deep Water," he said indifferently. "The fellow he gave the quarter to thought he wanted it sent by express. I found the receipt this morning. All the professor will have to do is go to Sahara and get it."

"Very neat," Harkaway commented thoughtfully, "and you look as though you believed it yourself. It is mighty decent of you, Biggs, to try and square Fairbanks on that quarter business. *I'd* let him suffer. Anyway, I am afraid it won't work. Dorothy won't swallow it, for one."

When Dorothy and Fairbanks returned from looking at the ocean he called to her. "Oh, Miss Dorothy! I found the professor's luggage."

Miriam glanced up interestedly from her preparations of sandwiches and salad on little wooden plates. "Oh, did you? Was that what you went to the station so early this morning for?"

Fairbanks maintained a masterly silence, but took the paper that Biggs held out to him. "Why, this is a receipt from an express company for my suit case!" he ejaculated presently.

"Yes," said Biggs slowly, "one of my men, the fellow you gave the quarter to, you know, thought you meant to have it sent to Deep Water. The charges were just twenty-five cents. All you've got to do is to go up there and get it."

Fairbanks glanced up with a queer smile. "I'm more obliged to you than I can say, Biggs," he remarked. "You've pulled me out of a hole." To his amazement the English-

man's face ruddied. "Don't mention it," he muttered, turning away.

Dorothy had taken all this in and her fine eyes sought to reward Biggs. That individual, finding her gracious glances upon him, flushed more furiously than ever. Miriam broke in with, "But how will Mr. Fairbanks get it? Oh, I know, Mr. Biggs can take him across in the launch!"

Biddleston, finding an opportunity of doing the right thing in his wife's eyes, instantly endorsed this and amended it. "Why can't Fairbanks and Dorothy run across now and get it while we're getting luncheon ready?"

"Excellent!" said the professor. "Come on, Dorothy!"

When they were gone Miriam looked at her husband but said nothing. To Biggs, however, she vouchsafed this remark: "Your boat is quite the most convenient thing!"

"Oh, quite!" said Biggs drily.

"It serves you right, old chap," Harkaway put in calmly. "It's all your fault."

Biggs stared into the fire and shook his head.

"I don't like your young American professors," he said.

At this moment Dorothy reappeared, followed by Fairbanks. "Your old engine won't go!" she said. "Mr. Fairbanks has tried and tried!"

Biggs instantly became cheerful. "I'll tell you, Miss Dorothy," he said, getting to his feet. "I'll come down and see what is the matter with it."

"The spark is out of business," said the professor confidently.

"Just sit down and take my place a moment," Biggs returned affably, handing the professor an empty spoon which he had been holding in his hand for no assignable reason whatever except that it seemed to give him an air of being occupied. "Just hold this spoon for me and I'll go down and see what the trouble is."

"I'll go too," said Dorothy. "The professor can help Miriam better than you can, anyway!"

CHAPTER XIV

HIS BROTHER, ADOLPHUS!

WHEN he reached the launch Biggs carefully cast off the painter and helped Dorothy in. "Sit down there and steer," he said.

Dorothy gazed in some alarm over the side as the *Spithead* floated out into deep water. "But your engine is broken!" she exclaimed. "We'll drift out and can't get back!"

Biggs calmly opened a locker where the batteries were and openly and ostentatiously repaired a broken connection. Dorothy looked at him wide-eyed. "Mr. Biggs!" she said severely. "You did that on purpose!"

Biggs straightened up and closed the locker. "Those things are always breaking," he remarked negligently. "The professor was right about there being no spark." He twirled the flywheel and the *Spithead* backed swiftly

out under the pull of her engine. "Now we'll go and get that luggage," said Biggs.

Dorothy manoeuvred the launch till it was headed directly for Deep Water, two miles across the bay. When Biggs had set the lubricators he sat down opposite her and smiled. Dorothy denied him a response. "I begin to think you are a schemer," she said coldly. "I really didn't want to go with you."

"But the professor's luggage," he insisted. "I knew you were anxious about it and you must be reassured." He nodded gravely at her. "I don't wish you to worry too much about the professor."

Something in his manner warned Dorothy and she refused to implicate herself. Biggs went on, "You think entirely too much of that young man. You oughtn't to forget your old friends."

"I've known you two weeks and Mr. Fairbanks two years," said Dorothy freezingly.

"I fancy it would take at least two years to learn to like the professor," was the unabashed reply.

"Two weeks is certainly too short a time to get used to *your* manners," Dorothy retorted frigidly.

Biggs promptly availed himself of the opening. "What have I done?"

"Oh, lots of things," Dorothy responded quickly. "You've been rude and impolite to my guest."

Biggs seemed heartbroken at the accusation. "I never meant to be rude," he said contritely. "But you American girls are so jolly!"

Dorothy leaned forward with apparent interest. "What do you really mean by 'jolly'?"

Biggs was thoughtful over this. "Oh, you are always up to snuff and taking a fellow up," he paltered.

"That will do very well," said Dorothy calmly. "I'll accept the definition. Now will you kindly explain to me why you hormswoggled Mr. Fairbanks's suit case?"

"Hormswoggle?" repeated Biggs blankly. "What does that mean?"

"It means precisely what it says," was the

tart reply. "Why did you hormswoggle the professor's suit case? Send it to Sahara and all that?" She looked at him sharply.

Biggs didn't flinch. "Some bally ass thought he wanted it sent to Deep Water by express," he said unblushingly. "And it was sent there."

Dorothy looked at him severely, but his eyes were frank and refused to harbour any expression of doubt, falsity or shame. She sighed and turned away.

Biggs opened the throttle a little more and as the *Spithead* responded he glanced across at his companion with a faint flush rising slowly in his cheeks. "I say, Miss Dorothy," he began, "how would you like to go to England to live?"

Dorothy gave him the full benefit of her clear, girlish eyes. "With you?" she responded quietly.

Biggs swallowed, gazed wildly about him, then screwed up his courage. "Yes," he said.

Dorothy considered this and then asked coldly, "Is this a proposal?"

Biggs grew redder than ever as he met her glance. "It is! I love you," he said with a mingling of respect and adoration.

There was a flush on Dorothy's cheek now, and she turned her eyes away. The seriousness on Biggs's face wasn't to be mistaken. She knew that. It wasn't the hour for flirtation, nor the man. Somehow she was afflicted with a desire to cry. That, she felt, would be fatal. Probably he would try to comfort her and would put his arms around her. She blushed more furiously than ever at this passing thought, restrained her tears and merely shook her head.

"But I say," Biggs said miserably, "I'm awfully in love with you, Dorothy. My people are first-rate, and all that, and I'd make you a good husband. Of course, I haven't any money."

Dorothy bent glorious eyes on him. "Haven't you any money or any place you'd like to build me a home on? Nothing that I could improve, so to say?"

Biggs was disconsolate but firm. "Not a

bally cent except what I make as agent. But that's not so bad, Dorothy. And I love you!"

The flush on Dorothy's face grew sunset-like. "You're a dear boy," she said briefly. "I know you'd make a good husband. But I don't love you."

Biggs took his fate like the man he was. The flush didn't leave his face nor the hunger die from his eyes. But he smiled, and thereby won Dorothy's respect forever. She was glad she hadn't fenced or tried to put him off, but had treated him boldly and frankly. It occurred to her that it was the first time she had met such an occasion in such a manner and she dimly wondered why Harvey Biggs (a nice first name, too) evoked her plain self without concealment.

When they reached Sahara Biggs vanished and presently reappeared with Fairbanks's suit case, which he carefully deposited in the launch without looking at Dorothy. Then he started the boat back for the picnic party. Half way across he said to Dorothy, respect-

fully and plainly, as though he were entitled to know, "Is it Fairbanks?"

"No," said Dorothy without any perceptible hesitation, and was immediately amazed at herself for answering so impudent a question.

"Is it Harkaway?" pursued Biggs.

This time Dorothy was silent. Biggs explained himself in four words: "I thought I might help."

"Help!" repeated the astounded Dorothy.

Biggs bent over the carburetor. "I think you deserve to be happy," he said, his voice shaking a little. Then he relapsed into a stillness that lasted over the next mile. Biggs was thinking hard, thinking so hard that he presently thought out loud. "Poor Alicia!" Dorothy heard him say. "*She* ought to have been happy!"

"Alicia?" questioned Dorothy, her feminine curiosity aroused at once.

"Oh, nothing," said Biggs hastily. "I was thinking of my father."

"Is your father's name Alicia?" persisted Dorothy, at first roguishly, and then imme-

diately sorry for Biggs because he was so genuinely miserable and she saw that she had touched a tender spot.

"Alicia was the girl they wanted me to marry," explained Biggs. "She had a lot of beastly money and I didn't have any, so here I am." Which explanation seemed to satisfy Biggs, but wasn't at all clear to Dorothy, who scented a romance and of course had to know about it down to the minutest details. She became at once very sympathetic and when Dorothy bent on one her liquid glances in pure sympathy it was really worth while unbosoming oneself.

"Then you didn't love her," she suggested tenderly and hopefully. Dorothy felt tender at that particular moment, because she had just told Biggs that she didn't love him, and what woman does not feel tender at such a time? The suggestion of hopefulness in her voice was due to a vague feeling of resentment against Alicia. Alicia had a delicate, flower-like aristocratic sound in Dorothy's ears, and she just as vaguely hoped that Alicia was older

than Biggs, or that she had a squint, or no eyebrows, or something so that Biggs needn't reproach himself too much.

"No, I didn't," answered Biggs. "But that didn't make any difference to Dolly——"

"Dolly!" interrupted Dorothy in surprise. "Another one?"

"No, Dolly's my brother—Adolphus, you know," explained Biggs. A shade of bitterness, not unmixed with contempt, came into his voice as he mentioned his brother. "There wasn't enough money for us all," he went on. "There never is. And Dolly was to get it all, of course——"

"Of course?" queried Dorothy. "Why should your brother get it all?"

"Oldest son," said Biggs. "The oldest son expects to get everything. You don't have oldest sons in America. That is, I mean an oldest son isn't any better than any other son; but in England the others have to stand aside for the oldest brother. He thinks that he is a little god and we must bow down to him. Now my oldest brother—I have only one brother——"

is an ass, but being the first born he will succeed to—to the—he'll get the property, you know, and the Governor and the Mater think he's all right—everything that Dolly does is always all right. There is an awful rumpus if things don't suit Dolly. He has his own special brand of tea at breakfast, just six pieces of toast, no more, no less. He'd be in a frightful rage if there were seven, and I believe he'd cry if there were only five. It has to be hot and freshly toasted and be ready when he gets down. It sometimes takes half a dozen loaves of bread and two dozen eggs for Dolly's breakfast. And then he has his own particular seat that he must sit in. It is nearest the fire in winter. In summer it is where he can see out of the window. At other seasons it's just where he orders it put. Often we can't sit down to eat till brother Adolphus comes, because he might have ordered his seat changed, and it wouldn't do at all if someone else took it. Once a schoolmate came home with me for the Christmas holidays, and before he had ever heard of Dolly he sat in Dolly's chair at break-

fast. I'll never forget the Mater's face, nor the looks of the Governor for that matter. An awful catastrophe was prevented by sending Dolly's eggs and his six pieces of toast to his room before he could get down, and the Mater had to go to his room to make him think he was sick, so that he would eat it there. It was easy enough to make Dolly think he was sick!

"You could see how it would be," continued Biggs. "Dolly said I ought to provide for myself—marry Alicia, you know. Said it was a duty I owed my family. By the family, Dolly meant himself. And if I wanted to be a pauper I needn't blame him; that I never could deny that he'd done his best for me. I told him he was a beast and why didn't he marry Alicia himself? He got in an awful rage; said I was an ungrateful brute; that Alicia was good enough for *me*, insinuating that she wasn't good enough for him. And I punched his face because she was too good for either of us. And then he put it up to the Governor in his own way, and the Governor almost had an attack of apoplexy, and told me,

among other things, that I ought to have some regard for the family dignity, meaning Dolly's dignity, and that I shouldn't be stubborn and impudent to my superiors, meaning Dolly. I told the Governor that Dolly was an ass and a fool, and then he had his apoplexy and Dolly ordered me out of the house. I went, but not before I punched the other side of his face for scriptural reasons. The Mater was sorry, of course, because I was going, and said something about 'your brother Adolphus' and peace in the family; that Alicia would have been most acceptable to the family—meaning Dolly; and that she was a dear, sweet girl besides, which she was, and so I went away and here I am."

"Did Alicia know about this?" asked Dorothy.

"No, unless Dolly told her—just like him, the brute!"

"Does Ali—do they know where you are?"

"Yes, I got a letter from the Mater when—when Alicia died. I always thought she loved Dolly. Dolly thought so, too, but now I

know she didn't. It was very sad, the Mater said in her letter, 'And your brother Adolphus'—she never spoke of him to me but she said 'your brother Adolphus'—'had to give up his house party, some distinguished friends from London, you know.' I'll bet Dolly blamed Alicia for dying and spoiling his house party, and I can't help wondering how Dolly had distinguished friends in London—a lot of bally fools, I suppose, like himself!"

"Did Alicia love anybody else?" asked Dorothy, looking at Biggs in an accusing manner.

"I couldn't say," answered Biggs calmly, as he ran the *Spithead* in to the shore and poked her nose into a soft spot in the sand.

"Hi! Biggs!" shouted Harkaway from the shore. "Cheer up! The worst is yet to come. Everything is ready but the coffee, and we haven't any coffee. Bid took it out of the picnic things before we started; thought it was a can of graphite, so he hunted up the real graphite can and put that in instead. It's good, strong-looking dope, but it's a little too rich to drink."

Without replying to this outburst from his suspected rival, Biggs solemnly helped Dorothy out of the launch, deposited the professor's suit case on the bank and then fastened his mushroom anchor to the longest rope he had and dropped it overboard at the stern. When he got out of the boat he jumped ashore in such a way that he gave it a shove. As the *Spithead*, under the impulse of Biggs's backward kick, floated away and rode at the end of the rope, he picked up the suit case and started to join the others who were waiting to begin lunch. Dorothy looked at the launch floating serenely and safely out of everybody's reach and then at Biggs in a suspicious manner.

"How are you going to get in again, Mr. Biggs?" she inquired.

"Oh, I'll get it when the tide goes out," he answered indifferently.

"But Mr. Fairbanks," she began, stealthily eyeing him; "Mr. Fairbanks, you know, talked of taking me out for a little ride, and now he can't get the boat."

"Fairbanks? Oh, I forgot all about the professor."

"But you have the professor's suit case in your hand."

"Why, to be sure," acknowledged Biggs. "How stupid of me. It's too bad. He could have had the launch just as well as not."

"I believe you did it on purpose," said Dorothy.

"Did you want to go out with the professor?" asked Biggs abruptly.

"No," was the decided response.

"Harkaway?"

Again Dorothy was silent at the mention of that name. However, there are degrees of silence. Since the story of Alicia and Biggs's part therein had come to her knowledge, she regarded Biggs in a different way, and her silence in respect to Harkaway assumed a different aspect. It was slightly less positive and not so full of meaning. Of this Biggs was wholly unconscious. Indeed, it would have taken an exceedingly acute observer to detect the change in her manner. After a

brief silence Biggs remarked, "Well, if Harkaway wants the launch I can throw a fish line aboard and haul her in, but the professor—the professor, among his other accomplishments, ought to be able to swim."

"Thank you, so much!" said Dorothy.

Biggs's efforts to fend off the distinguished Applied Mechanic, as he mentally dubbed him, did not stop at making it impossible for him to escape with her in the launch. Whenever Fairbanks sidled up to Dorothy, Biggs bore down on him and engaged his attention with a long and circumstantial account of some remarkable storm that had followed closely upon a fall in his barometer. After several unsuccessful attempts to elude Biggs, Fairbanks gave up, but his submission was only apparent. The picnic lunch was eaten, the things cleared up and stowed away in the Durable; they had explored every foot of Harkaway's property and were ready to go home, when Fairbanks said aloud, giving Biggs a defiant look, "Dorothy, I've engaged a launch for to-morrow. Please don't make any other engagement, but

accompany me on a trip up the bay. We'll be back in time for dinner."

Miriam was astonished, Harkaway was dismayed and Biggs subdued. Biddleston was the only one who said anything; a faint "Ha HA!" was all that occurred to him.

Dorothy looked at Biggs for help, but that capable individual had none to offer, so she said with sudden enthusiasm, "Oh, do let's go! Of *course* I won't make any other engagement."

CHAPTER XV

MORE MATRIMONIAL MANŒUVRES

IT was nine o'clock when Dorothy and Fairbanks reached the water front and the launch which he had hired for the day. Biddleston had accompanied them down from the house and before he left them he remarked uneasily, "It looks as if it might storm before long, Professor."

Fairbanks stared at the clouds in the southern sky, felt the warm sunshine between his shoulder blades and smiled in a superior way. "I guess you don't get very rough water on this little bay," he remarked. "I'll look out, of course."

"Biggs telephoned just before we left the house that his barometer was going down fast," Biddleston continued feebly. "But then Biggs's barometer doesn't hold any record for accuracy."

The young professor stiffened at the mere

mention of the Englishman—Britisher, he privately termed him—and he turned to Dorothy firmly. "Let's get started, Dorothy. Or are you afraid?"

"Afraid? Nonsense," she replied quickly, leaping into the boat. "I've heard of Mr. Biggs's barometer before."

So Biddleson left them and went his way towards the bank. A block farther on Harkaway met him and drew him aside. "Look here," he said with pretended anxiety, "Biggs says it's going to storm. Have they gone yet?"

"Storm, eh? Ha HA!" Biddleson nudged Harkaway in a meaning way. "Storm! Ha HA! I could tell by the looks of your face last night when the Professor asked Dorothy to go that there would be a storm of some kind this morning. I didn't need Biggs's barometer to tell me that." Biddleson nudged Harkaway again. "Ha HA!"

"That's all very funny," said Harkaway stiffly, backing away out of reach of Biddleson's nudges, "but I tell you that Bigg——"

“Ha HA! So you’ve got Biggs on your side, and you are out to do Fairbanks, are you? But you can’t scare that chap with a little imitation storm whirling around Biggs’s office. He’s a college professor, and he knows a whole lot, you know, you’ve got to think up something better than that. Ha HA! Fairbanks is a fine looking fellow, too. Eh, Hark?” Bid moved up to nudge Harkaway again, but Hark eluded him, making up his mind that if Bid said Ha HA again he would hit him.

“I’m telling you,” he said with great earnestness, “that it’s going to blow, and Biggs’s barometer isn’t the only one that says so, either. The one on the *Richardson* is way down, too, not so low as Biggs’s—couldn’t be expected of it, not so much practice, you know—but—say,” continued Harkaway after a thoughtful pause, “I am going to tell you something that no one but me and Biggs knows, and I know you won’t tell. On the square, now, Bid.” Harkaway lowered his voice and approached Biddleston, regardless of

possible nudges and said mysteriously: "I've found out how Biggs works his barometer. Those taps of his on the glass face are all a bluff. The hand is quicker than the eye, you know, but Biggs does it with his foot. That can be quicker than anything on occasion. I was down under the dock the other day when the tide was out and happened to look up. Right under Biggs's office and as near as I could tell, exactly under the barometer, I saw a most peculiar-looking contrivance. It was dark up under there, and I could not see very well, but what I did see made me suspicious. So I went up around into Biggs's office and watched him carefully while he handed out three different kinds of weather to three different people in ten minutes. After the last one went out, an old lady whose boy was fishing in a small boat on the bay—Biggs made the needle go clear to the top for her benefit—I made him show me how he did it. It seems he's got a loose board right under the barometer. Underneath are some cog-wheels, levers and things and a bicycle pump con-

nected with a small lead pipe leading up to the barometer. When Biggs steps on one end of the board, the pump sucks the air out of the barometer and down goes the needle, producing one of his justly celebrated storms. When he steps on the other end, it pumps air in, instead of sucking it out. At once he has a high pressure area of great intensity, the needle goes up, and you have a fine day while you wait. Foxy Biggs! Made it all himself. Is going to give it to me, if he leaves town. Says someone must keep up the reputation of Tidewater for any and all kinds of weather. It wouldn't be a bad thing to have around a real estate office. Now, would it, Bid?"

"Ha HA!" said Biddleston in commendation. "So that's how you and Biggsie conjured up a storm to keep Dorothy from going with Fairbanks?"

"Oh, no," said Harkaway hastily. "I forgot to say that if you keep your feet off the board the instrument works just like any other barometer, and Biggs this morning swore by all his gods that he hadn't been anywhere near

it. Real storm this time; sure thing." Harkaway assumed a look of great anxiety. "Say, Bid, really you ought to keep Dorothy from going."

"I can't," said Biddleston calmly. "They've gone already. If you go to the wharf, you'll see them on the bay."

"Where are they going?" Harkaway demanded shortly.

"Way up the bay," Biddleston returned. "They said they would be back before dark."

With this Harkaway had to be satisfied, as he went back into his office and waited for old man Hardy, whom he was going to tell of his determination never to sell Harkaway's Addition for any price less than one hundred thousand dollars. Biddleston went to the bank, took off his coat and put on his office jacket. And across the street Biggs sat at his high desk scowling at his barometer between glances out on the sound where he saw the launch bearing Fairbanks and Dorothy up stream.

Fairbanks himself was quite content. He had finally got Dorothy off by herself. More-

over he had arranged things to remind her especially of their long days on the lake back in Minnesota when he had come very near to proposing to her—but never quite to the point. This morning he viewed her bright face and slender figure with satisfaction. There was no doubt in his mind, now, that he loved her. And he intended to tell her so, and he was almost sure she would respond as he hoped she would. But of all this he said nothing. His words were, "I'll trust you to steer us through the narrow channels up the bay."

Dorothy smiled back at him. "I don't know them," she answered. "But I guess we can get off if I run us aground. Isn't this a fast boat!"

"I made that part of the bargain," was the response. "I told the launch man I wanted the fastest boat he had. I never ran an engine like this before; but it seems to be going finely."

Fairbanks set down the oil-can and wiped his hands on a piece of waste in a professional manner. Then he moved back from the en-

gine and across from Dorothy. "This is heavenly," he said with a sigh. "I've been waiting for this six months!"

Dorothy shook her head at him. "I shouldn't think you'd say that when you know it's lots nicer on the lake back in Minnesota."

"Oh, if you were there," Fairbanks acquiesced. "But you see it's you that makes things worth while."

Dorothy assumed a severe air. "If you are going to flirt, I'm going to steer this launch straight in for shore."

"I'm in dead earnest," the professor said penitently. "I am not flirting at all, Dorothy. I've been waiting six months to tell you that I——"

At this moment Dorothy discerned a terrible snag poking its dark head out of the current, drove the steering wheel hard over and the launch performed that evolution known as "pulling turnips," which involves a vast amount of tipping, a deadly plunge and then a sickening slide shoreward. When she had the boat under control again, the professor was

trying to look as though he hadn't reversed the engine.

"What did you do that for?" Dorothy demanded indignantly. "Did you think I couldn't steer past it?"

"But you looked scared!" said the professor meekly.

"It wasn't that old snag that scared me," was the tart reply. "If you don't trust my piloting without all the time backing the engine up, come and steer yourself."

Half an hour later the launch was slipping gaily through the narrows above Sahara and Fairbanks had recovered sufficiently to smile. But he said no more until they had entered the long, green-bordered upper bay. Here the waves from the cutwater sheered silverly away in a broad V to either shore and the ruffled wake boiled like a stream of watered silk behind them. In that comparative silence and solitude Dorothy's face grew still more peaceful. She leaned back in her seat and gazed at the dark hills. "I love this country," she murmured.

"I don't think you would care to live in it all your life, though," Fairbanks responded. "It's nice, and all that! but, after all, one likes to be in the swim, as they say; to be nearer the centre of our national life."

"That sounds quite Fourth-of-Julyish," was the teasing answer.

Unabashed, Fairbanks pushed this aside. "I don't know but that it *has* been said before," he admitted. "But I am talking of specific instances. Now take yourself, Dorothy. With all your education and brains, you can't imagine yourself settled down here. I can't imagine you living dully in Tidewater as the wife of—of, well of that ticket agent, Biggs."

Dorothy sat up quickly. "That's very odd," she remarked. "You must be a mind reader. I was just thinking of that same thing!"

Fairbanks glanced at her curiously. "What funny things you say!"

Dorothy smiled faintly. "But I *was* thinking of him!" she protested. "I like Mr. Biggs."

Fairbanks smiled with a certain condescension. "Oh, I daresay Biggs is all right. But you couldn't live here, you know. You're made for better things."

Dorothy leaned forward interestedly. "Just what is your notion of a woman's duty to—er—herself and the world?" she demanded.

This question seemed leading and the professor of Applied Mechanics distrusted its purport. At the same time it gave him an opportunity of saying what was on his mind and he gallantly tackled it.

"For an educated woman," he began, "I should say she must never lose sight of the fact that she *is* educated. She oughtn't to waste it."

"On Mr. Biggs; I see."

"Biggs was merely an example," Fairbanks said stiffly. "I didn't mean to say anything against him. As I was saying, a woman like you oughtn't to waste her chances of making her training count for something. She ought to marry in her own class, you know."

Dorothy nodded. "I see," she said dream-

ily. "But don't you think—" she beamed on him brightly—"most educated men are awfully stupid?"

"Stupid? What do you mean by that?"

"Exactly what I said," she replied firmly. "The ordinary college man thinks he's better than other people. So does the college girl. I even find myself thinking that way. I almost despise girls who haven't been to a university and I'm all the time looking down on perfectly nice men who don't know Greek or what the fraternity pins stand for. It's the university attitude of mind. For instance, you wouldn't be wasting your time talking to me if I wasn't a college girl!"

"Wasting my time?" the professor echoed. "Dorothy, you ought to know better, if you don't. It wouldn't matter to me if you didn't know your letters!"

Dorothy drew a long breath and looked away. It had come and she didn't know just what to say to head him off. And, as a matter of fact, Fairbanks, once launched, wasn't for turning back under any circumstances.

With a look, almost of exaltation, he moved closer to her and poured out his heart.

Possibly because they were both vitally interested, or because of the proverbial blindness of love, neither had observed that the launch, now skirting a high bluff, was rapidly leaving the narrow channel and making for a long shallow opposite out of which peeped a few rocks. So it happened that before Fairbanks had succeeded in making his feelings plain, they were both thrown into the bottom of the boat by a bump. The launch heeled over, the propeller churned the water and then everything stopped, including the engine.

Fairbanks picked himself quickly up and without a word gazed wretchedly over the side into six inches of water. Sundry applicable quotations from Emerson entered his mind. Astern of the launch a fifty foot trail of mud and sand showed that it was that far to deep water. Dorothy on her feet with her hands to her hair, added the final straw by exclaiming, "And the tide is going out! We shall never get out of here in the world."

"But the tide will come in again," protested the professor. "Then we'll float off all right."

Dorothy sat down and stared at him. "It will be six or seven hours yet," she remarked tragically, "and it's now only ten o'clock or a little after, isn't it?"

The crestfallen Fairbanks consulted his watch and remarked that it was eleven. "I looked at the tide table and the tide is low at exactly eight," he went on. "So it hasn't really started down at all but it's coming in and will be high at two o'clock. It can't be long now till we're afloat again."

Dorothy peered over the side, pouted and finally decided to make the best of it, as the launch lay a hundred yards from any shore. The professor investigated the propeller and found it well wrapped with weeds. Clearing these he found the engine to work excellently. "Give us six inches more of water and we'll run out in good style," he exulted. "Cheer up, Dorothy!"

"We'll have to eat our lunch right here in the boat," she said practically.

"Good," said Fairbanks, recovering his spirits.

"And it looks as if it might storm," the inexorable girl continued, staring at a black cloud above the bluff.

Fairbanks utterly refused to become disconsolate. Dorothy was with him; the lunch had not been forgotten, and there was no Biggs to interfere with his pleading with the girl he loved.

CHAPTER XVI

BIGGS PULLS OFF A REAL STORM

BIGGS stood in his office, studying his barometer with great care. One might have supposed that he really believed in it. "By Jove, I wish you could tell all that will happen to-day," he was muttering to the excellent instrument. "For it's going to blow and I'd like to know how that bally idiot of a professor is going to get back safely."

The barometer didn't answer this, so Biggs, determined to get some response, took the telephone trumpet off the hook and rang up Harkaway. "Say, old chap," he called, "just slip down to the jeweller's and see what the glass is doing."

At the other end of the line Harkaway looked over at Mr. Hardy, and saw that the old gentleman was busy looking at a map.

"What's the matter, Biggs?" he questioned. "Someone nailed the board down so that you can't use yours?" . . . "Oh, all right, I'll go down!" When he came back and spoke through the telephone, he was really uneasy. "It's dropped two tenths in the last hour," he said. "But I'm not worried about 'em. Fairbanks is a competent fellow, and the launch is all right. If it starts to storm, they will undoubtedly land at Deep Water."

Biggs hung up the receiver, and went back to his bills. At noon, he called the jeweller up and learned that the glass had fallen another tenth. He went to lunch with a red spot on either cheek. At two o'clock he cast a last hurried glance into the southern sky and called Harkaway up on the telephone again. "Harkaway," he said abruptly, "go down and get in the *Spithead* and bring her over here. These people aren't in sight yet. But Deep Water says they have passed there. Inside of half an hour it'll be blowing a gale and that launch won't stand up to it. We'll take the *Spithead* and go get 'em." He waited for

Harkaway's assent and then hung up with a bang.

Ten minutes later the *Spithead* chugged up to the wharf and Biggs dropped in, displacing Harkaway at the steering wheel beside the engine lever. "I'll run her," he said curtly.

"Don't care if you do," said Harkaway cheerfully. "Rotten engine. You ought to get one like the Durable. Three cylinders would just——"

"We've got just five minutes to beat the professor to the point," said Biggs. "If we can get 'em the other side of that"—he advanced the spark until the engine sang—"we'll do nicely. But if they get this side and the wind comes"—he steadied the launch on her course—"then it will be nasty work."

"And the professor will likely get wet," said Harkaway, lighting a cigarette with great difficulty.

"Don't talk to me about the professor," said Biggs crossly. "Didn't I tell him it was going to storm? And he must go on and drag that fine little woman out just to make a pic-

nic for him!" Harkaway saw a sudden fire in Biggs's eyes. The other launch poked its nose around the point a mile away.

"Now we are in for it," said Biggs, glancing savagely at the clouds that rolled billow-like up towards the zenith. A little squall flipped across the bay and left foam in its wake. Harkaway threw his coat over the engine to protect the spark plug from spray. Biggs nodded thanks, and headed the *Spithead* to windward.

Still the wind held off, while Biggs strained his eyes to see some signs of weariness on the part of Fairbanks. Harkaway did not seem much perturbed; he was chuckling softly to himself at the idea of his rival getting wet. Fairbanks, in the hired craft, steadily chugged out into the main channel, still refusing to turn towards shore and shelter. Every moment the southern sky darkened. Over the ridge of trees on the ocean side puffs of cloudy vapour eddied; overhead resounded a dull sound of wind. Biggs stood up and waved his hand violently, but neither the professor nor Dor-

othy seemed to see his gesture. "This is rotten," Biggs said, seating himself again by the engine. "In one minute this bay will be mush with whipped cream on top of it."

The *Spithead* swung around under his skilful hand and took the next squall delicately on the bow. Then the gale broke. Up to this moment Harkaway had thought the whole expedition was a lark, and that the clouds and the wind were a sort of tribute to Biggs's barometer, but now he crouched in the shelter of the little peak. A half mile away and to leeward they saw the other launch plunge sharply and then keep on its steady way. Dorothy appeared, a slight figure in the stern. For five minutes Biggs kept his boat headed into the increasing wind then scowled at Harkaway. "Gasoline won't buck this," he called. "But anyway we can run over to them and help out." The *Spithead* thrashed round, was caught by a wave and threatened to capsize. But Biggs held her firmly to her work, she sped about and plunged off towards Fairbanks and Dorothy.

“Good boy, Biggs,” shouted Harkaway, still cheerful.

As the two launches drew near to each other Biggs rapidly appraised the gale, shook his head and called to his companion, “It’s going to be nasty in a few moments. Let’s get the girl out of that other boat and run for shore. We can land through the surf while it’s no higher.”

But Fairbanks either did not anticipate the manœuvre, or trusted to his own judgment. As the *Spithead* rolled alongside he deliberately put his helm over, caught the next wave full on the side and was blown down the bay before Biggs could follow. By this time the wind was furious. The bay was a rolling expanse of foamy waves and even the Tidewater shore appeared to be a distant and hazy eminence in the sea. But Biggs said nothing. He brought the *Spithead* carefully before the wind, and crouching so as to shield the engine from the slashing spray, snorted after the professor. “He’ll make the point and try to land by the wharf,” he vouchsafed

to Harkaway. "Lucky if he don't swamp her in the attempt."

Harkaway wiped the brine from his eyes and shook his head. "He's going right across," he shouted back.

Biggs seemed incapable of believing this. But a few minutes more showed that Fairbanks, in ignorance of the tide and the terrific ebb seaward, was trying to regain his original landing place. They saw the launch gradually head around more and more till it was being born broadside towards the bar and almost upon the breakers that were thundering opposite the life-saving station. Harkaway's gesture of despair brought a frown to Biggs's calm brow. He headed after them.

To Biggs's eyes the situation lay out as plainly as a chart. Behind him was the southeaster, steadily gaining in strength. Before him tumbled the bar, tossing high spumey crests into the lowering sky. On the one hand the life-saving station's little run-way appeared momentarily through the surf; on the other towered the flimsy magnificence of

Devonshire Hall. And in the channel between, a quarter of a mile ahead of him, Fairbanks was driving to death in the surf, while Dorothy sat steadily in her seat and trusted him. Biggs cast a swift glance at Harkaway. Harkaway smiled with pale lips and they shook their heads at each other. Both knew what was coming—the battle in the huge, swirling cauldron made by the outflowing tide and the incoming breakers, all stirred to double fury by the howling wind.

The *Spithead* tore along, each wave from the bay behind her trying to ride over the fantail stern and fill the cockpit. But Biggs was master of his craft. Fairbanks was doing well, too, Harkaway thought. How had he kept that frail launch afloat so long? But why didn't Fairbanks see his danger? Why didn't he turn and make back for the inner bay while there was time? Harkaway even shouted the question at Biggs.

Biggs didn't answer it. Fairbanks answered it himself by suddenly putting his helm over and trying to make the launch take the

incoming seas broadside on, in an effort to reach the foam-swept pier in front of the Thompson place. That manœuvre brought Biggs to his feet. "She'll capsize, Hark!" he yelled. "Keep your eye out for heads while I run across."

Harkaway waved violent remonstrance. "You're crazy!" he cried. "You'll drown us both!"

Biggs paid no attention to this. His eyes were fixed on the other launch. He saw it yield to the helm, swerve round, point its bow towards the pier and then soar upwards on a booming roller from the Pacific. Caught in that vast grasp it hung, careened far over, so that Biggs could see Fairbanks clutching the reverse lever and hanging to the wheel, could see Dorothy clinging silently to the thwarts. Then the roller dropped them, the next wave dashed clean over the launch, and Biggs grimly watched for a chance to send the *Spithead* after it. The chance came. For a full sixty seconds Harkaway, clutching any handhold, stared fearfully at the man who

was master of him and the launch. Then the *Spithead's* engine cheerfully coughed the water out of the carburetor and Biggs said aloud, "If we can keep in this eddy a minute we're all right. Stand by to pick Dorothy out of that other boat."

Harkaway balanced himself as best he could and Biggs calmly drove the bouncing *Spithead* through the next breaker and almost on top of the swamped launch. Harkaway found Dorothy's outstretched hands and she was quickly drawn to comparative safety. A nimble leap, and Fairbanks was in the *Spithead*, abandoning his water-filled and helpless craft. "I'm afraid that launch is a goner," he said miserably. But he received no answer, for Biggs was now anxiously manœuvring to save the *Spithead* from a similar fate.

Half an hour later Biggs ran his dripping boat in towards the shore above Thompson's place, stopped his engine and swung an anchor over the bow. "We can't run her clear ashore in such rough water," he explained to Dorothy. "It's a case of wade!" Before she could reply

Biggs sedately stepped into water that came up to his waist and held out his arms. "Come on, Miss Dorothy!" he said.

Dorothy came, with meek obedience, and was set down on the sand just out of reach of the breaking waves. Meanwhile Fairbanks and Harkaway were wading ashore, looking disheveled and white. For the first time since she had been caught up out of the sinking launch Dorothy found her tongue. Her speech was directed to Biggs, the capless, coatless and muddy. "I don't blame Alicia," she said enigmatically.

Harkaway stared at her in a seasick, dazed way. "Who was Alicia?" he demanded inanely.

Fairbanks heard the allusion to Alicia, too, but he did not attempt to understand it. He considered what she had said to be a wandering of the mind, due to overexertion. "Don't you feel well, Dorothy?" he asked anxiously.

Dorothy refused to answer either of them and merely smiled wanly at Biggs, who blushed and tried to look dry, but failed. As a last

resort he discovered Mrs. Thompson's automobile coming up the road. He promptly halted it, dragged the astonished Henri out of his seat and pointed to the dripping trio. "Take Miss De Poe and these chaps home," he commanded.

"But!" protested Henri, outraged, and looking wildly around for help.

"No buts, Henri," said Biggs. "Take Miss De Poe home directly. Open that door!"

Henri opened the tonneau door and Biggs lifted Dorothy in with one sweep of his arms. A well-known voice, evidently expressing fright, received her. It was Mrs. Thompson who stared at the capless Biggs, then at the white and desolate Dorothy and said shrilly, "What?—who is it? Is anybody dead? Where?"

Biggs thrust his head in and responded quietly. "Ah, Mrs. Thompson! Sorry to disturb you, but Miss De Poe is very wet. Will you please take her home?"

Dorothy, feeling powerless and wanting ter-

ribly to cry, now found voice enough to say something about trouble and inconvenience. Biggs brushed this aside. "I'm sure Mrs. Thompson will be delighted," he said firmly.

That lady, recovering her wits, instantly said that she would be delighted. And as soon as she had established a *modus vivendi* she proceeded to ask what had happened. Recognising that curiosity would insure Dorothy's being taken home, and not allowed out of the car till the last word was told, Biggs stepped back. As he did so Henri climbed into his seat and indicated to Fairbanks and Harkaway that they might double up beside him. They promptly availed themselves of the invitation and Biggs, saying something about going after Fairbanks's launch, refused to join them, and waved Henri on. That personage, recognising in Biggs an imperious character, obeyed, leaving him to wade back to the *Spithead*.

Once more on his own tossing half-swamped craft, Biggs proceeded methodically to bail it out. When this was done he stood up and looked off into the eddy a half mile below

to see whether the other launch had been thrown on the sand or had swept out to sea or had utterly vanished.

Before long he caught sight of it. The abandoned craft, being no longer directed by human ignorance, had obeyed the laws of nature and refused to go on. It still hung high on each roller, tossing wildly when the gale caught it. Biggs sat down again in his own boat and managed to find some dry tobacco and a pipe in the locker. He lit the pipe with some difficulty and wiped his face and hands on a piece of waste. The storm was settling down in real earnest, he thought, as he scanned the fast darkening expanse of De Poe Sound. It would blow all night, probably. Fairbanks would lose that launch. The cost of it was over six hundred dollars, he remembered. Fairbanks would have to pay that money to the launch man.

"I'll bet the boy can't afford it," Biggs said to himself. "I think I'd better get it back for him."

So he hoisted up his anchor, started the en-

gine and calmly headed the *Spithead* down towards the bar. As the launch was swept out into the main channel again and he dodged the first dash of spray, Biggs glanced up the hill towards the Biddleston cottage. He was thinking of Dorothy and wondering just what she meant by saying that she didn't blame Alicia. "Didn't blame her for dying," he thought. He tried to think that Dorothy meant that Alicia wasn't to be blamed for loving him, but he instantly decided that this was probably the very last thing that Dorothy would have thought of. He sighed.

CHAPTER XVII

BIGGS BORROWS MRS. THOMPSON'S CAR

IT was dark when Biggs finally arrived once more off the Thompson place, this time with the swamped launch towing behind the *Spit-head*. The upper bay was still wind-swept, and the waves were higher, for the tide was coming in and met the force of the gale. His own boat was nearly a wreck and the engine gasped and coughed asthmatically. It would take him a good hour to make the wharf at Tidewater and the *Richardson* was nearly due from Bones. Biggs remembered his duties as agent and decided to anchor both launches off the shore in the eddy and wade to land and walk back to the office. So he shut down the engine, cast the anchor and waited until both boats swung easily to its pull. Then he

dipped overside, found bottom with his feet and wearily stamped up on the sand. To his amazement he saw a figure standing at high-water mark, evidently a woman, for she was wrapped in a cloak and he saw the glint of wet on her hair. He stopped and peered into the darkness. A shaky voice addressed him.

"Aren't you horribly cold, Mr. Biggs?" It was Dorothy, a husky voiced, shivering Dorothy. Biggs nearly fell down.

"What—*what* are you doing here?" he demanded, going close enough to catch the pallor of her face.

"I was waiting for you," she said almost with a sob. "I was so afraid when you went back after that launch!"

"Oh, that was nothing," said Biggs, wondering wildly whether he was dead or alive. "I got it."

"But you risked your life!" Dorothy went on, gaining courage. "And I saw you out there!"

Biggs blushed in the darkness. He felt the lack of a cap, coat and one shoe, but he

managed to respond with, "Most kind of you, I'm sure!"

"It wasn't kind either!" she protested. "I was afraid you'd be drowned!"

Biggs took another step forward and Dorothy retreated. He heard a tell-tale squashing that could only mean one thing: Dorothy's feet were thoroughly wet. And as it dawned on him that she had left a warm room, and a hot fire, and toddies and blankets and congratulations to walk a mile and stand in the rain and wind, just to see whether he was coming safely back, he gasped. He didn't answer at first, for he was thinking rapidly. When he had found his plan—it took him ten seconds—he stepped forward briskly, caught her up in his arms and walked hastily to the road. Then he put her down and said, "Can you walk a hundred yards?"

"Why didn't you ask me that at first?" said Dorothy indignantly.

"Just wait here a moment," said the undisturbed Biggs. "I must see if I have any dry matches." He found his oilskin case and

managed with chill fingers to get a match, which he lit and held to Dorothy's face. He seemed satisfied with this extraordinary inspection, and remarked, "Poor girl! Come on!"

"I'm going home," said Dorothy, choking a sob back.

"You are not going to walk," was the determined response. "Just get in the shelter of that wall here. I'll be right back." He vanished up the road, leaving Dorothy in a pitiful state of bewilderment. It came over her what she had done. Nobody *could* understand it! And this Englishman thought she was crazy. Cold to the bone, she shivered miserably, and—she cried into her wet sleeve. Then her bravery returned and she started as swiftly as she could for home. "He thinks I'm crazy," she thought bitterly. "And he's gone for help or something." The notion of being subjected to scrutiny and questions by strangers appalled her. She quickened her pace.

At that moment there was a sound of cough-

ing up the hill by the Thompson place, a bright light appeared and resolved itself into two lights that lit up the road almost to her feet. Then she heard a rapid chatter whence the lights came, a mixture of excited French and English intermingled with the no less excited but thicker and huskier tones that sounded as though they proceeded from the throat of the war-like Scot, McLean. But before she could interpret this amazing phenomenon, the lights came rapidly towards her, and Mrs. Thompson's big car came to a stop in front of her, while Biggs jumped out, caught her in both arms and thrust her into the seat. Biggs then jumped in, gave the engine a wide throttle, whirled the car around and started for the Biddleston cottage at a terrific speed. As they swept round the turn in the road the wind bore down on her the shouts of two men, Henri protesting to the storm in pure French and McLean roaring Scotch oaths in a most unpresbyterian fashion. Biggs explained in a word. "The bally idiots thought I was trying to steal the car and tried to stop me."

Dorothy settled herself more primly in her seat and wiped her eyes. "Where are we going!" she asked weakly.

"I'm taking you home," said Biggs calmly, skidding the rear wheels at the next turn and catching the road by a masterpiece of steering. "I can't think what you did this for."

Dorothy bit her lip, thankful for the darkness and said nothing. Her companion went on, "You need a guardian!"

"That's very nice of you to think so," she said shakily, trying to manage her voice and keep it dignified.

"Think so!" echoed Biggs, as the Biddle-son lights appeared. "My dear girl, between the Fairbankses and the other bally asses on this bay, they'll allow you to kill yourself yet!" He slowed down the motor.

Dorothy regained all her poise during this chiding. As the car slipped to the door and the light fell on her face she turned her dark eyes on Biggs. "I'm sorry to have inconvenienced you, Mr. Biggs," she said, controlling her quivering lips a moment. "But I really

thought you might be drowned, or something, and I wanted—I was afraid—I——” The lips quivered in spite of her. Biggs stared at her fascinatedly. He swallowed and then said suddenly, “What did you mean this afternoon by saying you ‘didn’t blame Alicia’?”

Dorothy saw the front door open and Miriam peering out, her hand over her eyes. So she slipped past Biggs and out of the car. From the roadway she met his eyes for a fleeting second. Biggs dropped the steering wheel. The blood mounted high to his temples and he was suddenly aware that the heavens had opened. He started to leave his seat in answer to that silent message. But Miriam called down, “Is that you, Dorothy? Where *have* you been, you crazy child! I’ve been ‘phoning——”

Dorothy turned and fled up the steps. Biggs gazed after her, saw Miriam’s amazed countenance bent on him, remembered his coat, shoe and cap and instantly withdrew into the motor again. The car slipped down the hill by gravity and into the night while Dorothy

stared at Miriam and met all demands for an explanation by merely saying, "I never meant it like that! I never meant it at *all*!"

"Well," said Biddleson, hovering around with Harkaway on the outskirts. "I should think you didn't mean it! That's the second time you've got wet to-day! Of course you didn't mean to get wet, did she, Harkaway? Women never do mean anything. Was that Mr. Thompson in the car?"

But Miriam silenced him with a look and led Dorothy off to bed. Later she came down and remarked sympathetically that Dorothy was to stay in bed for a week. Fairbanks, dry and warm and miserable, hoped that it wasn't so bad as that. But he got little comfort from anybody, looked at his watch a dozen times, tried to smoke and finally gave up and went to his room saying that while it was only eight o'clock, he thought he had better get to bed. When he was gone Miriam stated that all men were silly, and refused to abate a word of this judgment even for Harkaway.

In the meantime Biggs had returned the

car, and exchanged defiances with McLean. Then he went up and rang the Thompson doorbell, asked for Mr. Thompson and in six words thanked that gentleman for the loan of his car. The banker stared at Biggs's capless head, his coatless chest and his shoeless foot, all dripping wet, received his thanks and allowed him to go. Later Mr. Thompson sent for Henri and McLean and heard their narratives. At the conclusion he peered over his spectacles at McLean and Henri. "Ahem," he coughed. "If Mr. Biggs wants anything again you'd better let him have it. Mr. Biggs is a man I have a great respect for. Say nothing of this to your mistress!"

At half past eight Biggs reached his own room. Here he instantly plunged into boxes and cases and drawers and hauled out various articles of apparel till the room was littered with them. Then he shaved, bathed and dressed himself with scrupulous attention to his tie and his cuffs. Later he appeared on the wharf and said to the wondering captain of

the *Richardson*: "Been unavoidably detained captain. Don't worry about the bills. I'll fix 'em up to-night and let you have them in the morning."

"But!" said the outraged mariner, "you haven't——"

"Of course not," said the serene Biggs. "I just told you when I would do it," and with this vanished into the storm.

It was just ten o'clock when Miriam rose to bid Harkaway good-night. Harkaway had just finished telling for the third time how Biggs had rescued Dorothy and Fairbanks, and Biddleston for the third time had shaken his head at Miriam's audible disapproval of Biggs. "I don't care, Rae." Miriam said, "I think Mr. Biggs might have warned them, or something. He's always talking about that barometer of his, anyway. Why didn't he tell Professor Fairbanks that it was going to storm?"

"I told them," said her husband weakly.

"Biggs was the whole thing," Harkaway protested generously. "I wasn't in it! I'm

sorry for the professor losing the launch, though. It will make a hole in his purse to pay for it."

"That's just it," said Miriam, as they went towards the door. "Why didn't Mr. Biggs get the launch, too?"

"Look here," said Biddleston, feeling that somehow Biggs was getting the worst of having performed a heroic rescue. "You aren't fair to Biggs, Miriam. Biggs is a very capable fellow."

"Mr. Biggs is capable of *anything*," was Miriam's majestic and crushing reply.

At that moment the bell rang. "Who can it be?" Miriam exclaimed. "At this time of night, too. Maybe Mrs. Thompson is sick, or something."

Her husband had passed on into the hall and now opened the door. Biggs walked in.

"Why, Mr. Biggs," said Miriam coldly.

Biggs, not noticing the chill in her voice, nodded affably and laid his hat on the little table just by the coat rack. Then he shook hands with Biddleston and Mrs. Biddleston as

though he hadn't seen either of them for a year, and proceeded to take off his topcoat, which he carefully hung up, putting his hat over it.

"Why, you are all dressed up," remarked Biddleston, not knowing what else to say under such extraordinary circumstances.

Biggs refused to notice such a puerile remark and politely waited for his hostess to lead the way into the sitting-room. Miriam paused to give her better half a look that seemed to say, "He must think he is invited to breakfast. You'd better wind the clock and perhaps he will go." At least that is what Biddleston interpreted the glance to mean. But Biggs was unconscious of this and calmly followed Miriam into the sitting-room, where he nodded to Harkaway and sat down.

"I'm glad to see you, Biggs," said Biddleston cordially, recovering himself. "We wanted to thank you for your splendid rescue of Dorothy and the professor to-day. It was fine!"

"Not at all," said Biggs, blushing slightly. "Where is Dorothy?"

"Dorothy has retired," said Miriam with great firmness.

"But I must see her," said Biggs in a determined manner. "I came to see *her*, don't you know."

"But she was sick and cold and I put her to bed," said Miriam freezingly. "The day was entirely too much for her."

Biggs looked very much concerned. "Is she ill?" he demanded.

Biddleston came to the rescue. "Not really ill, Biggs, old man; but after all that wreck and the rescue and going out again and getting wet the second time Miriam thought she had better go to bed. I know she will be sorry to miss you."

"Ah, she's not ill, then," said Biggs, vastly relieved. "Then I can see her?"

"But she's gone to bed—retired!" said Miriam on the verge of hysterics.

Biggs was undisturbed. "Really? But I must see her," he insisted. "That's what I came for, don't you know!"

At this point Miriam began to fear that something was the matter with her visitor; that

perhaps his mind had given away under the excitement of the day. She detected a gleam in his eye that she had never before seen in the mild orb of the Tidewater Navigation Company's agent. Hastily excusing herself she fled up the stairs. At Dorothy's door she stopped. Dorothy, she hoped, was asleep. But Dorothy herself called out, "Miriam!"

Mrs. Biddleson opened the door and went in. Dorothy was sitting up in bed, very pale but most evidently not sleepy. "Who was it that rang the bell?" she asked languidly.

"Hush!" said Miriam, in a loud whisper, closing the door after her carefully. "Something is the matter with Mr. Biggs. I believe he has gone crazy. He's down there now."

Dorothy sat up very straight in bed. "Crazy!" she echoed in a whisper. "Mr. Biggs!—Miriam——"

"Yes, crazy!" repeated Miriam firmly. "It's ten o'clock and after, and he's down there all dressed up and wants to see you. He simply insists he must see you—I told him you were in bed and it didn't seem to make any

difference at all. I left him with Rae and Mr. Harkaway, but I don't know what to think. I never saw such a funny look in a man's eyes!"

"Does he still want to see me?" demanded Dorothy, blushing.

Miriam felt herself becoming hysterical, but controlled herself as she enlarged on the enormity of Mr. Biggs's persistence. Her sister listened to her a moment and then got out of bed. "You run down and tell him I'll see him," she said hastily. "Go on now, hurry up, and I'll get on some things, Miriam."

"Never!" said Mrs. Biddleson firmly. "You stay right in bed. Why, I never heard of such a thing!"

"Probably not," said Dorothy, slipping round the room. "But Mr. Biggs saved my life to-day and then went and got Fred Fairbanks's old launch at the risk of his life. And if that man wants to see me he shall, even if it is ten o'clock at night!"

"It's half past ten," said Miriam in a faint voice, wondering whether it was all a bad

dream. She felt sure it was when Dorothy took her by the shoulders and thrust her out of the room, saying impatiently, as she did so, "Well, what are you staying here for? Can't you see I've got to dress?"

In a daze Mrs. Biddleston slowly descended the stairs, trying to think up some excuse that would make Mr. Biggs leave the house before Dorothy came down. The thinking took a long while and it was five minutes before she opened the sitting-room door.

Biggs looked up anxiously at her entrance and said, "Is she coming down soon?"

"You'll have to excuse her to-night, Mr. Biggs," said Miriam, in what she meant for a soothing tone.

Biggs stared at her and then at Biddleston. His face set in firmer lines. A thought seemed to strike him. "I suppose it *is* late," he said apologetically. "But I couldn't get here any sooner. And I really must see her, Mrs. Biddleston! I'll stay here until I do, by Jove!"

In her distress Miriam appealed with a glance to Harkaway. That tried friend made a bold attempt. "Why, Biggs, Miss Dorothy wouldn't even see me," he said half humorously. "And I'd be offended if she made an exception in your favour, Biggs, old boy."

Biggs remained obdurate. He turned to Miriam again. "What did she say?" he demanded.

At this moment Mrs. Biddleson heard a sound on the stairs that made her hastily dart from the room into the hall. At the very top of the flight stood Dorothy, dressed in a shimmering *négligé* of some scarlet stuff. The shaded lamps threw a fairy light on her, from her softly rumpled hair to her little red slippers. Miriam gasped, "Go back! Go back!"

Dorothy stopped short and said in her slightly husky voice, "But Mr. Biggs wants to see me!"

Those words reached Biggs's ears. He got up, strode past the astounded Biddleson and into the hall. He saw Dorothy, in her girlish

beauty, looking down on him. "Ah," he said, resting his hand on the low newel post. "I simply had to see you!"

Dorothy noticed that Biggs's face was very earnest and that he was nicely dressed and cleanly shaven. She took another step down, in spite of Miriam's frantic gesture. "They all think you're crazy to want to see me," she said gently.

Biggs nodded. "I had to," he declared. "You see—it was that Alicia thing you said!"

Dorothy carefully withdrew the tip of one slipper under the hem of the shimmering gown. "Yes?" she said inquiringly.

"I'm a bally idiot," Biggs went on, seemingly forgetful of the interested trio that was ready to pounce on him if he began to show violent symptoms. "But I must—" he emphasised the "must"—"know whether you feel that way to me."

Dorothy grew thoughtful. "Do you mean you must know whether I feel towards you as Alicia did?" she whispered down the wide stairs.

"Yes," said Biggs, gazing at her with all his eyes.

Dorothy bent over slightly and took another step down. "Did she think ever so much of you?" she demanded gently.

Biggs suddenly swallowed. "I'm not thinking of her," he said a little hoarsely. "It's you!"

A warm wave of colour flowed into Dorothy's cheeks. She drew back a little. "Must you know to-night?" she said softly.

"I must!" said Biggs firmly. "I came here on purpose. I had to!"

In the silence that followed Harkaway quietly sought his coat and hat. Miriam stared, breathless. Biddleston gaped shamelessly. Dorothy seemed to notice nothing of all this. She was looking at Biggs. It was Biggs alone who heard her whispered, "Yes!" He would have plunged up the stairway, but with that whisper Dorothy vanished, leaving the shaded lamps to light only the empty landing.

For a moment Biggs stared up the stair-

case, and then he turned round and shook hands with Miriam, who gazed at him fascinatedly, as if she were hypnotised. Biggs then insisted on shaking hands with Biddleson and Harkaway. With his coat on again, his hat in hand, he bowed and opened the door. His keen blue eyes were aflame with happiness. He suddenly burst out to the silent three: "You see, I simply had to come! I came to see *her*, don't you know!"

With this he departed into the darkness, and Miriam stared at her husband, who stared back at her with such intensity that neither saw Harkaway quietly slip out of the door, too, into the darkness.

"Harvey *Biggs!*" said Miriam at last, in an awed voice.

A little, happy laugh echoed down the empty stairway. And "*Dorothy Biggs!*" was what Mr. and Mrs. Biddleson heard from the invisible heights.

CHAPTER XVIII

BIGGS GIVES UP HIS POSITION

A CURIOUS and subtle change had come over Harvey Biggs the next morning. Although he saw the boat off for Bones, collected his scattered bills, receipts and memoranda, tapped the barometer and generally behaved as he always did, he did it all with a certain British formality that would have reminded a close observer of the days when Biggs first came to Tidewater. He had the air of a man who was about to dedicate the Albert Memorial, or tender the keys of London to the Lord Mayor, or take his seat in the upper house of Parliament. And, for some reason, all this sat very well on Biggs, too. Putting on his gloves, he locked the office and going over to the bank asked for Biddleson. That personage quickly responded, putting down his morning mail, and accepted Biggs's for-

mal handshake. "Come in, Biggs," he said genially.

Biggs came in, found a chair near Biddle-son's desk and said in an abrupt manner, "I've come to tell you of my family, Biddle-son. As I am going to marry your sister-in-law, I fancy you're the guardian."

Biddle-son promptly disclaimed that responsibility. "Miriam has always looked after her," he said awkwardly. "I really don't know anything about her."

"It's about myself that I came to speak," corrected Biggs. "I come of good family, you would like to know," he said with dignity. "Really good family"—Biggs relaxed a little—"and all that, Biddle-son. I know Mrs. Biddle-son counts on that. I shouldn't like her to think that Dorothy is going to marry a chap that isn't exactly the right sort so far as parents and relatives go. I have heard of the De Poe ancestry, so I thought you might cable over to London, you know, and they'd tell you about mine."

Biddle-son blushed. "I know you well

enough," he said. "You're all right. Good job, quiet sort of fellow and all that. But Miriam——"

Biggs smiled faintly. "That's it," he said. "I know your wife strongly disapproves of me. Quite right, too, you know. So just cable and find out. Old Hailey is our family solicitor—fine old chap—never told a lie even for a client. I've got his address here and——"

"Why cable?" said Biddleston. "Give me the address and I'll write over—just to satisfy Miriam, of course. I know——"

Biggs was obdurate. "No, cable! I want Dorothy to know, too, that I haven't gained her consent under any false pretences. I haven't any money, but my people are all right, Biddleston. So cable to Hailey and he'll tell you, so that Mrs. Biddleston and Dorothy will be certain about this." Biggs flushed, feeling the importance of the transaction.

"Well, perhaps it might make it easier for Dorothy," Biddleston admitted doubtfully.

"To tell the truth, Miriam likes you, but she——"

Biggs waited politely for Biddleson to finish. As Biddleson couldn't bring himself to express his wife's exact sentiments, he failed to conclude his sentence, but nodded his head and assured Biggs again of his undying regard.

"I want Dorothy to understand one thing," Biggs insisted. "I haven't any money—never expect any. But these other things count. Now be a good fellow and send off a cablegram."

"But what shall I say?"

Biggs wrinkled his brows and finally asked for a pencil. With this he was absorbed for five minutes. At the end of that time he handed Biddleson the following message:

T. G. H. Hailey,

Chancery Lane, London.

Send Thompson & Co., Bankers, statement of birth and family of Edward Harvey Biggs-Biggsworth, immediately.

BIDDLESON.

This Biddleston read and then exclaimed, "Then your name isn't Biggs, but it's Biggs-worth!"

"No, it's Biggs," said that individual firmly. "Nothing but Biggs. But the family name is Biggs-worth." This plain elucidation of a knotty point brought from Biddleston a mere, "Ha HA!" which he was ashamed of instantly.

"All right," said Biddleston. "That message seems to cover the ground. But it will cost money, you see."

Biggs promptly drew out his purse. "I'll pay it and an answer," he promised. "I'll send it myself. If it goes straight off we ought to get an answer back by this afternoon."

Biggs put up his purse, formally shook hands with Biddleston and left.

Out on the street he hesitated. Should he go out and see Dorothy? He glowed at the thought. Then it struck him that possibly it wouldn't be the correct thing to do, seeing he was on trial yet, so to speak, till the cablegram from Hailey should put him right. He com-

promised by re-entering the bank and asking Biddleson in a loud voice whether Dorothy was well. Receiving a satisfactory answer he went out and back to the office. But he was still restless. A thought struck him. He took the telephone trumpet off the hook and called up Mrs. Biddleson. Having got her, he asked for Dorothy. That young lady promptly came to the telephone.

"This is Biggs," he said. "Did you catch cold?"

He heard Dorothy's light laugh. "No, and I've just found out from Professor Fairbanks that you returned the launch in good order. The professor is awfully pleased and grateful."

"Let him thank you," said Biggs, rubbing his forehead with eagerness to say something of what he felt. "By Jove, you looked stunning last night."

To this the only answer was an "Oh!" Biggs felt the chilliness of it and realised that, after all, he and Dorothy hadn't explained themselves very fully to each other. "I can't talk over this bally wire," he complained. "But

I've cabled to London to the family solicitor for my pedigree. I hope it will convince your sister that I'm all right, Dorothy. But I haven't any money! I think it might—I supposed that—I fancied you might not want me to call till that was settled."

Dorothy's laugh sounded through the telephone again, and Biggs smiled as he heard, "Silly boy! I'm not going to marry your family—didn't you ask me to marry you?—and if you'll walk out this way I'll meet you on the beach. The storm is all over and——"

"I'm putting on my hat," said Biggs promptly and hung up the receiver. As he left the office he tapped the barometer thoughtfully. It almost immediately registered 31.98, the highest ever recorded by that invaluable instrument. Old Mr. Hardy, just in from Harkaway's office, stopped to inquire about the weather from the departing Biggs.

"It is the highest I've ever seen it," said Biggs calmly. "It will never be bad weather again."

Hardy stared at the now vanishing Biggs

and smiled. Harkaway had told him something of the events of the day before. He knew nothing of Dorothy; but he bore in his breast pocket a deed to the whole Harkaway Addition, which he was just going down to have recorded. He continued to smile, thinking of the home he intended to build on its lovely prospect.

Biggs got back to his office just in time for the early afternoon boat and amazed the master of the *Richardson* by enjoining him carefully to ask the operator at Bones for a cable message from England, to be addressed to Mr. Thompson, the banker.

"But it will be telephoned over, as usual," said the captain. "What's the rush?"

Biggs thrust him bodily across the gang-plank. "You bring me that message," he said quietly, "or I'll sink your bally boat and never give you another receipt for baggage!"

In the afternoon Biddleston met Harkaway on the street and they stopped to chat about the Durable. Harkaway seemed dissatisfied with it, and blamed the carburetor. "I'll sell

my half to anybody," he said morosely. "We got stung. It's the fault of that catalogue of yours, too."

"That's a first-class machine," said Biddle-son warmly. "Look at the fun we've had out of it already. Haven't you got your money's worth——"

The expression on his old friend's face stopped him. "I just sold my property," Harkaway responded. "Hardy wanted it badly and I had no use for it, so I let him have it."

Biddle-son regarded him silently, looked away and then laughed, this time with an emotion that even the abhorred "Ha HA!" couldn't conceal from Harkaway.

"Biggs is a good fellow," said Harkaway earnestly.

"Miriam doesn't like him," said Biddle-son, solemnly.

Harkaway shook his head. "He's a fine chap," he insisted generously. "But—after all—Bid, I like your wife above all women!"

Biddle-son instantly became serious. "She's

a fine woman, Hark," he agreed. "And I never was quite in her class. But I'd like to see her happy about Dorothy. Dorothy is her little sister, you know, and she feels this business terribly. It wouldn't have been so bad if you hadn't been there—and on the stairs, too!" He was silent a moment and then broke into a smile. "Biggs is capable of anything, Miriam says. Ha HA!"

Harkaway laughed, too. Then a thought struck him. "By the way, how's the professor?"

Biddleston's face fell. "He's going away to-morrow. He didn't know anything about last night till breakfast this morning when Miriam told him. Dorothy wasn't down yet and you know Miriam couldn't sleep for thinking about it. So she told him and the professor nearly fainted over his eggs, choked on his coffee, you know. You never saw such a wilted man in your life. And then Dorothy came in and he tried to congratulate her and she pretty nearly kissed him. I tell you, Hark,"—Biddleston's face grew still more solemn—"Dor-

othy oughtn't to do those things! Told Fairbanks she thought he was the finest chap in the world and insisted on getting him six fresh slices of toast!"

Harkaway grinned. "I must go up and get her to tell *me* about it," he remarked. "Lucky Fairbanks! Lovely Dorothy!"

"Come to dinner," said Biddleson earnestly.

"Will Biggs be there?"

"No-o-o. Miriam wouldn't ask him. Said he was entirely too presumptuous. And she used to like Biggs, too," he added reflectively.

"I can't come after all," said Harkaway hastily. "But I'll come some other time."

"Better come," urged Biddleson. "Help me out!"

Harkaway smiled. "No, if the professor is going away to-morrow I must have him to dinner with me to-night," he said. "You know I promised Dorothy I'd be nice to him. So I'll have him over to my boarding house and we'll come up later. So long!"

"Harkaway is a fine chap," thought Biddleson, as he returned to the bank.

Later Harkaway was smiling into the drawn face of the professor and trying to make light of the day before. Fairbanks, being a man, accepted this cheerfulness and played up to it. And so they went off in the Durable, with old man Hardy in the tonneau, to take a last view, so far as Harkaway was concerned, of Harkaway's Addition.

It was half past eight when Biggs rang the doorbell of the Biddleston cottage that night. Dorothy herself came to the door, kissed him and took his hat and coat. "I understand that over in England the wives always have to wait on their husbands," she remarked archly.

"Oh, I say," said Biggs, reddening. "You don't really mean that."

Dorothy bowed low. "Permit me to announce you," she said, flinging the sitting-room door open. "Miriam, here is Mr. Harvey Biggs!"

Miriam got up, as pleasantly as she could, and shook hands. Biggs sat down, very red, and seemed on the point of saying something important. But the result of his effort was

merely to state that the barometer was very high. Miriam accepted this graciously, and Biggs was encouraged. "I hoped to bring up a cable message," he said abruptly. "From my family in England, you know. But it didn't come."

Miriam was interested, as her husband had said nothing about Biggs's visit to the bank in the morning. Biggs went on, "I got your husband to cable the solicitors and ask about my people," he explained. "I know you're particular about family and all that—quite proper, too. And so I asked your husband to cable across and get some information. Really, my people are all right, Mrs. Biddleson."

Miriam refused to commit herself. Dorothy frowned, her pretty eyes on her lover. "Harvey, I'm ashamed of you!" she said.

Biggs grew redder than ever. "Oh, I say, by Jove," he protested.

"I am!" said Dorothy firmly. "I allow you to make love to me up a stairway and propose to me while I'm in my dressing gown, and then you think you have to explain about

your family. I'm not marrying your family. And if *I* marry you that makes it all right!"

Biggs wouldn't hear of this and Dorothy realised that she had carried a jest too far. Biggs didn't make it plain who his people were, but he seemed to emphasise their goodness and respectability. To this Dorothy listened quietly. Then she said, mischievously, "Have you any money, Harvey?"

Biggs wasn't at all surprised at such a question. "Not a bally cent," he affirmed.

"Well, I'll marry you anyhow," said Dorothy, dimpling.

"But, Dorothy!" said Miriam coldly. "You must be supported in the accustomed style!"

What answer to this was on Dorothy's tongue none ever knew—except possibly Biggs. For the bell rang and Harkaway and Fairbanks appeared. When their coats were off and they had looked at each other the requisite number of times they consented to enter the sitting-room and there offered their congratulations to the calm Biggs and the

blushing Dorothy. Miriam surveyed them pleasantly and mentally resolved that, outside of her own family, no one should ever know that she disapproved of Biggs. Dorothy was committed, and, she admitted sorrowfully, deeply and wonderfully in love. So she paid Biggs so much attention in the next half hour that he welcomed Biddleston's arrival.

Biddleston came in, rubbed his hands, glanced around and remarked with an air, "Quite a happy family, I declare!"

The echo to this ineptitude was another ring at the doorbell. Mr. Thompson was shown in.

The banker seemed flurried and embarrassed. He greeted Miriam and shook hands solemnly all around. Then he cleared his throat. "I have a message for Mr. Biggs," he said diffidently. "Could I see Mr. Biggs a moment?"

It appeared (by unanimous consent) that he could. He withdrew himself and Biggs into the hall, whence the others heard various mutterings, followed by Biggs's voice saying, "Poor Dollie! I must tell Dorothy."

So Biggs came in, flourishing a piece of blue paper which Mr. Thompson explained had been brought down from Bones just that moment by the operator in a row boat. "Thought it was important," he said. "Said he was a friend of Biggs's and so brought it over." Mr. Thompson repeated the "brought it over" several times while Dorothy was reading the message, which Biggs handed her quietly.

Dorothy read it and re-read it, and then lifted dewy eyes to Biggs. "I'm so sorry!" she said.

"Poor Dollie!" said Biggs warmly. "Poor beggar!"

Miriam looked her curiosity and he instantly handed the message to her. "The people never told the bally solicitors my address," he explained. "So when Mr. Biddleston cabled them this morning they took the opportunity of sending me word this way."

"But I don't understand," said Miriam, holding the paper to the light.

"Read it out loud," suggested her husband. Miriam obeyed.

LONDON, September 1st. `

Messrs. Thompson's, Bankers,
Tidewater.

Inform Honourable Edward Harvey Biggs-Biggsworth his brother Lord Adolphus fatally ill. Credit one thousand pounds London & San Francisco Bank. Draw on Earl of Brockhurst if needed. Come home.

HAILEY.

"Now what does *that* mean?" said Miriam, completely at sea for once.

All looked at Biggs. He flushed a still deeper red. "The Earl of Brockhurst is the Governor," he explained gravely. "Adolphus is my brother, the heir to the title and the property. He never married, you know. That says he is dying and so I must go home and help out."

Miriam dived at the root of the matter "But who are *you*?" she demanded.

"I suppose I'm the next Earl of Brock-

hurst," said Biggs meekly. Then he caught Dorothy's velvet eyes. "Poor Adolphus! But I'm glad after all. I'm glad. I hope you don't mind, my dear, but you've got to be Lady Biggsworth now, and later on you'll be the Countess of Brockhurst."

"Poor Alicia!" said Dorothy with soft lips. Biggs gave her a smile that told her by that word she had warmed his heart, and forever made herself worthy of any future title and allegiance. But Miriam was dazed and demanded further details. Biggs was unable to give any. "I told Dorothy about it," he said blankly.

Dorothy blushed and shook her head. "Dear boy," she said softly, "you never once told me your father was an earl."

"But I told you my people were all right," he contended.

Mr. Thompson broke the silence by offering his farewells. Then he turned to Biggs. "If my bank can offer you any service, command me," he said formally. He put away his spectacles over which he had been peering at Biggs

and Dorothy, and added with a cough, "Ahem! Even to my wife's automobile."

Biggs smiled. "Thanks, if you'll give me a lift toward the office," he said quietly. "I must get back, I promised the captain that I'd have his bills made out to-night."

"But you don't need to work any more!" said Miriam.

Biggs went over and shook her hand. "You see, I'm paid to do it," he explained, "so I must do it." Then he went to Dorothy and bowed. "May I come to breakfast?" he asked humbly.

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